From Maintenance to Growth:

Church Revitalization through Creative and Transforming Community Engagement

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ABSTRACT

From Maintenance to Growth:
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This project grew out of the belief that when a church is in maintenance mode, significant and sustained church revitalization can be accomplished through seeking direction from God and thereby establishing creative and transforming community engagement processes involving development of definitive, reflective, constructive and strategic learning environments. A blended deontological and narrative ethics model for church is suggested based on faithfulness to God's unique calling on our lives. A significant review of the literature aimed at church renewal and growth over the second half of the twentieth century was conducted and reported on from a leadership perspective. Additional review was made in the areas of new organizational and leadership models, with specific emphasis on learning environments as explained by Chris Argyris and Peter Senge. Emphasis on dealing with adaptive challenges and mobilizing adaptive work was studied from the perspectives of Ron Heifetz and other secondary authors. Model I and Model II behavioral understandings from Argyris and Schon helped to define a new process for church revitalization. This process included elements from Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal's discussion of frames and Scott Cormode's discussions of layers and constructive faithful action. These concepts were applied to two different church environments and conclusions were made as to their usefulness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We are human beings created in God's image. Not so that we would see God when we peer into the mirror, but so that we would continue working for the creation of a world open to the coming and existence of God's kingdom.[1] God's creation is not complete until the Messiah returns. In God's image, we are created to create until the end time, the second coming when we will all be taken up, or not.

The church is more than a community of faith. It is a place where faithfulness is incubated and grown. The church provides a place where we can "return to base," not just to praise God but for renewal, reconditioning, retooling, and reorientation. For this purpose, the church must stay focused on reaching beyond itself to the greater community in the name of God and for God. Churches are not meant to be merely a place of comfort on Sunday morning. There must remain a healthy tension between the fear of God and the comfort of the Holy Spirit if we are to expect God's blessing to be upon the church in the form of increased numbers;[2] but also in increased faithfulness. Ultimately, the church needs to be faithful to God's call upon it.

As human beings we are also called to be faithful to God in our own lives, both in participating in congregational life and serving as ministers in the community. God calls each of us to be part of a specific congregation. That calling is affirmed when we visit a congregation and it feels "just right." But being part of a church extends beyond just attending worship. God calls no one to nothing and everyone to something. Our gifts and

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[1] "God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...," (Gen. 1:28). All scripture passages are from the New Revised Standard Version.
[2] "...the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers" (Acts 9:31).

calling are part of and essential to God's call on the congregation. The congregation's call and response is essential to the bringing in of the Kingdom in the community where we live. Each church has a specific and unique calling to make up the needs of the creation of the Kingdom within the community.

The Body of Christ exists at three levels; the various communities of the world, the churches in the community, and the people within the churches. All of these must serve God out of their calling and giftedness.[3] The Body of Christ is larger than any particular doctrine, congregation or denomination. The Body includes all that are called to serve. It includes the whole of creation to be faithful to its Creator. We must continue the process of creation and prepare the field for a bountiful harvest. This must be done with our eyes and ears focused, not so much on success as on faithfulness to God's calling upon the lives of all of the saints.

Problem Addressed by the Project

The problem addressed by this project is that churches in decline have generally focused solely on the need to increase attendance and participation. They need to move away from standard success measures and focus on faithfulness to God's Great Commission of creating and transforming disciples. This move from maintenance to growth and redirection from success to faithfulness means that churches need a new paradigm for leadership. This paradigm needs to include an adaptive construct to allow the church to continue to respond to the ever changing context.

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[3] "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (Eph. 4:11-16).

Importance of the Problem

The mainline Christian churches have been in a state of decline for many years. What's more, there seems to be a tendency to stay that way. Donald Messer describes the congregations on the liberal end of the spectrum, as having become "keepers of the aquarium," rather than "fishers" of men and women. He says that "serious leaks have resulted in continued membership drains, stimulating serious reexamination of what is happening in local congregations." [4] Recent figures, reported in Christianity Today, claim that since 1960, mainline church membership has declined by 21 percent, moving from 29 million to 22 million. [5] Some denominations have suffered greater reductions in membership than others during this same period: the Disciples of Christ, 55 percent; the United Church of Christ, 39 percent; and the Episcopal Church, 33 percent. The Presbyterian Church experienced a similar decline. [6] As United Methodists, these statistics point to a serious departure from our defined purpose for the Church that comes from the Great Commission. [7] It is also inconsistent with the stated mission of the United Methodist Church which is to "make disciples of Jesus Christ." [8] Interestingly, over the same forty-year period, overall membership in Christian churches in the United States increased by 33 percent; that increase was almost completely enjoyed by the evangelical movement, evident both in new church starts and internal movements within denominations. The evangelical church renewal

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[4] Donald E. Messer, Contemporary Images in Christian Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 147.

[5] Michael S. Hamilton and Jennifer McKinney, "Turning the Mainline Around," ChristianityToday, Aug. 2003, 34.

[6] Robert Wuthnow, The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing, 1989), 72. In the two decades following 1966, the Presbyterian Church average congregation size fell from 326 to 256. The denomination lost more than 1400 congregations.

[7] "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

[8] The United Methodist Church, The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2000, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2001), ¶ 120.

movement within the United Methodist Church grew during this period of decline to involve 630,000 members and 1,400 churches. This represents the largest movement of its kind within the mainline denominations. This suggests that through a refocus on our congregational purpose and the Great Commission there still may be hope for us. The question remains however, how much of the fundamentalist baggage might we successfully leave behind in the process.

Politically, evangelical church renewal movements have not gained much momentum from a denomination-wide perspective. Evangelical renewal movements within mainline denominations have found their greatest success working on a local church basis. The denominations have rightly resisted moves towards adoption of such a conservative theology on the whole. [9] Ultra-conservative theologies often carry with them poorly formed and narrow perspectives on major ethical issues. This can hinder real engagement of theological discussions leading to peace with justice action for change in the community. Our ability as United Methodists to engage the issues for discussion and action has been a hallmark of our denomination and one of our greatest strengths. This diversity of theological expression exists because of the theological traditions brought forth by our founder, John Wesley. Our Book of Discipline states this: "Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason." [10] John Wesley was able to embrace the discussion of issues, yet still engage the church in significant evangelistic activity. The theology he brought places scripture at the center of the church and Gospel sharing as our mission, but it still makes room for social justice. Have we lost the ability to do all three or have we just lost our way?

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[9] Hamilton and McKinney, 34.
[10] Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, "Theological Guidelines," ¶ 104.

In 1984, The United Methodist Church reported that they had lost fifty thousand members and were hemorrhaging at a rate of a thousand members a week, closing the equivalent of three "average" churches each week in the United States. [11] The denominational response was to legislate a change by setting a goal of reaching twenty million members by 1992. [12] This goal represented more than a doubling of the membership at that time. Many books were published over the ensuing years with much emphasis on employing secular characteristics for making this church growth happen. But it didn't happen. Merely deciding to grow, and applying secular marketing and recruitment procedures to the problem was not, and is not the answer. For the church the problem is one of theology, not methodology. The answer must come from God and our willingness to follow our individual and congregational call to be the Body of Christ.

The theological focus for each congregation should remain in the hands of capable pastors who seek their ultimate direction from God. And historically within the Methodist tradition it has been that way. The responsibility for maintaining the focus of the congregation falls, not solely but mostly, on the shoulders of the pastor. However, moving the church to focus more on accountable discipleship, disciple building, and neighborhood evangelism can be a difficult task when pastors are busy tending to the excessive administrative duties of an overdeveloped organizational structure. The laity seem overwhelmed with maintaining the church's property and programming. Also, Pastors today seem to have an unhealthy fear of ambiguity, compromise and conflict within their

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[11] Wilke, Are We Yet Alive?: The Future of The United Methodist Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986) , 26.
[12] Ibid.

congregations. Although parishioners may speak of a desire to spread the gospel, as Richard Wilke describes, we have become a church turned inward.[13]

A move to focus outward and toward engaging the community once again will require adaptive change. The necessary adaptive change can and will pose some significant struggle within the church leadership. Pastors today often avoid struggle, fearing a greater departure of members from the church rolls. Frederick Douglas once asserted: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening. This struggle may be a physical one or it may be both moral and physical, but there must be a struggle." [14] Pastors must find the courage to bring their congregations into this conversation, into this struggle.

As previously mentioned, the struggle to move from maintenance to growth has in recent history been addressed by implementing leadership and/or management concepts employed and proven effective by the secular business community. Examples might include the Total Quality movement in the early 1990s, [15] or by the "empowerment/equipping" leadership models commonly used by churches today. The church seems to run about ten years behind the business world in the implementation of these models. In that period of time, between business adoption and church adoption, the context changes making the models obsolete. By the time the church gets around to setting them up, business has already moved on to newer leadership models.

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[13] Ibid., 29.

[14] Quoted in Donald E. Messer, <u>Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry</u> (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) , 184.

[15] Total Quality Improvement was part of a larger movement developed by Walter A Shewart, W. Edward Deming. Joseph M Juran, and others which was effectively introduced to the church growth movement by Ezra Earl Jones. Ezra Earl Jones, <u>Quest for Quality in the Church: A New Paradigm</u> (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1993)

In business, new leadership models are chosen for their better congruence with the context in which they are employed. The Newest models are employing methods for flexibility with built-in responsiveness for change, in attempts to avoid their rapid obsolescence. The church must also select a model of leadership that is in accord with the context, employed at the right time and with the flexibility to adapt and change with the needs of a congregation and its community. Such a model needs to focus on ongoing adaptive change rather than a series of technical solutions[16] that are generally outdated by the time they reach the sacred community.

Any standard organizational model needs to have a means of ongoing assessment that can define its value in the face of the changing context. Businesses can simply watch profit margins, return on investment, or relative value. Numbers are used in our secular society as a measurement tool to quantify success. So it comes as no surprise that churches seek to measure success similarly by monitoring declining, static, or rising membership rolls and attendance figures. Although the Great Commission calls us to make disciples, this is not just about increasing our numbers on the membership rolls and attendance at church sponsored events. In other words, measuring a church's success or the value of a leadership model is not just about membership numbers.

Some form of a measurement of "faithfulness" is more consistent with what we are seeking here. Of course, God is the ultimate judge of our faithfulness, because only God truly knows what his will is for each of us as individuals. Although we may seek to be faithful to God's will, it is also only revealed to us in God's own time. Furthermore, faithfulness can only be measured when in context around a specific and stated mission which has been called, felt and affirmed through relationship with God. An ethical construct

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[16] Please refer to "Definitions of Major Terms," pages 9 to 13, for explanations of these concepts.

for dealing with discernment, decisions, and evaluations is necessary to embrace this ideal. Chapter 2 suggests such an ethical construct.

A church seeking increasing faithfulness has both communal and individual aspects as it moves towards greater sanctification.[17] God seeks to create, recreate, and transform us, both individually and communally to God's perfect will, and as Christians, we must choose to accept it. In seeking God's will for our collective lives, it is necessary for us to participate in adaptive change (changes in our values, beliefs and behaviors), ultimately leading us to greater faithfulness.

Measuring increasing faithfulness through adaptive change presents challenges in developing and assessing an effective leadership model for church renewal or revitalization. These challenges are also addressed in Chapter 2 which discusses the ethics of church revitalization. A constructive answer to these challenges is offered by developing an alternative way of measuring success in churches, which includes but also extends beyond attendance and membership. It will involve developing environments within our Christian communities that accept God's grace through responsive change and acknowledgment of God's continuing faithfulness. We must remember the words of Jesus: "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded."[18] As we move through our lives in ministry we must remember to be expectant like Mark Olson, who reminds us that "when the gospel is

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[17] Sanctification is a process of growth by which God's grace is imparted to us as a result of our listening and learning daily, engaging the dynamic needs of the communities with which we interact, and doing all of this to the glory of God.

[18] Luke 12:48b NRSV.

proclaimed and there is an encounter with Jesus, change, real transformative change, will take place."[19]

Moving from maintenance to growth is more than increased attendance and participation. It is about moving from standard success measures, towards a measure of faithfulness to God's Great Commission and being open to God's work of creating and transforming disciples. Moving from maintenance to growth is about church revitalization. Church revitalization is possible only by engaging God and our communities, and expecting God's resurrection power to find its way today through creative and transforming community engagement.

Thesis Statement

The thesis of this paper is that when a church is in maintenance mode, significant and sustained church revitalization can be accomplished through seeking our future direction from God and thereby establishing creative and transforming community engagement processes involving development of definitive, reflective, constructive and strategic learning environments.

Definitions of Major Terms

The illumination of the meanings of a few terms may be helpful before continuing.

Adaptive Learning - "Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior."[20] That change involves a process of learning. Adaptive learning is the process by which that change is made.

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[19] Mark A. Olson, Moving Beyond Church Growth: An Alternative Vision for Congregations (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002) , 77.
[20] Ronald A. Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994) , 22.

Adaptive Work - A definition of adaptive work as described by Heifetz follows: "Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face." [21]

Church Renewal - Church renewal is defined as a process of moving the church to be a living witness of God in our present culture by the development and implementation of constructs and strategies meant to provide for the processes of reformation and revitalization.

Church Revitalization – Church revitalization is used interchangeably with the term Church Renewal for the purposes of this project.

Community Engagement Processes - This term describes processes that involve direct analysis of the context of the church and the community surrounding it, for the purposes of facilitating an increased focus on the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through word and deed.

Constructive - This step in the process begins to formulate a new identity appropriate and consistent with a call to minister to the community.

Definitive - This is the first step in a process focusing specifically on evaluating existing perspectival identities that establish a current position evident by a directly observable theology-in-use, or how we define ourselves by what we do.

Double-loop learning – reflecting on the situation and the role oneself plays to consider personal definitions of normative states in the process. [22]

Espoused Theology - A set of theological beliefs which a person would claim openly as their center of being and understanding. "A master program for dealing with difficult

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Chris Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," Harvard Business Review, 1 May 1991, 6.

situations…based on principles and precepts that fit our intellectual backgrounds and commitments." [23]

Faithfulness – From an authentic knowledge of God, basing all actions on an expression of trust and loyalty to God.[24]

Flight to Authority - The delegation of a difficult situation to a person or group in authority thereby avoiding possible necessary adaptive work necessary for the implementation of lasting change.

Frames - Acknowledging differing perspectives is essential for making sound decisions. Bolman and Deal define these perspectives as *frames*. "Frames are both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus. Frames filter out some things while allowing others to pass through easily. Frames help us order experience and decide what to do." [25]

Holding Environments - Heifetz defines this as "any relationship in which one party has the power to hold the attention of another party to facilitate adaptive work." [26]

Holon – Rendle defines this as "a term coined by Arthur Koestler to suggest that everything is both a part and a whole simultaneously."[27]

Layers - When viewing situations from different perspectives, (ie, theological, nurturing, or administrative) it is helpful to consider that all perspectives are important to

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[23] Chris Argyris, "Good Communication That Blocks Learning," Harvard Business Review, 1 July 1994, 80.

[24] Julian N. Hartt, "Faith," in The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, ed. James F. Childress, and John MacQuarrie (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986) , 222-24.

[25] Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997) , 12.

[26] Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 109.

[27] Gilbert R. Rendle, Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998) , 66.

understanding the whole of the situation. Scott Cormode suggests that if viewed as layers, the advanced leader can see the situation with a greater sophistication for analysis. [28]

Learning Environments - This is a leadership environment which minimizes judgment and expectation. It maximizes the embrace of the ideal, which states that all persons are present within an organization to learn and grow in knowledge of and faithfulness to Christ.

Lenses – They assist in taking a particular perspective to clarify and evaluate an issue. For example, looking through the lens of theology one understands a situation in one way where, looking through a relational or administrative lens one might see the situation quite differently. Considering a metaphor of spectacles with two differing lenses, one sees a situation from a multi-dimensional understanding.

Maintenance Mode - For the purposes of this paper, a church in *Maintenance Mode* is defined as any church, which had experienced less than an average of 10 percent growth over the past three years in either membership or the combined attendance at worship, educational and outreach ministry activities.

Pacing - Monitoring and controlling the level of felt pressure on an individual or group in the process of adaptive change. According to Heifetz, pacing is dependant on "three broad determinants: (1) the severity of the adaptive challenge and the stress it generated. (2) the resilience of the [persons] and their support system, and (3) the strength of the holding environment her authority provided for containing and channeling the stress of the challenge." [29]

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[28] Scott Cormode, "Multi-Layered Leadership: The Christian Leader as Builder, Shepherd, and Gardener," Journal of Religious Leadership, 1, no. 2 (Fall 2002) : 102-03.

[29] Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 109.

Reflective - This is step two in a process of considering change, which considers the context more completely and compares and contrasts other church entities that share the same or similar niches. It seeks appropriate questions and surveys the context for answers.

Single-loop learning – responding to a situation based on knowledge and experience, reflecting only on the situation.[30]

Skilled Incompetence – Managers using practiced routine behavior (skill) to produce what they do not intend (incompetence)." [31]

Spiritual Gift – "a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body." [32]

Strategic - This is a process of defining specific and future action to implement the newly constructed identity to bring all ministries or activities in line with the specific mission of the organization.

Technical Solution - A simple clear-cut solution applicable to a well-defined problem. This phrase is often used in contrast to the need for adaptive work. [33] Examples would include placing a band-aid on a cut to avoid excessive bleeding or hiring a secretary to share the workload for an overworked pastor. Technical solutions do not require learning to either define problems or implement solutions.

Theology-in-use - A set of theological beliefs evident through our actions, particularly in times of stress. The phrase is often used in contrast to "espoused theology." [34]

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[30] Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," 6.

[31] Chris Argyris, "Skilled Incompetence," Harvard Business Review, 1 Sept. 1986, 2.

[32] C. Peter Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts: Can Help Your Church Grow (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979) , 42.

[33] Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 73-75.

[34] Argyris, "Good Communication That Blocks Learning," 80.

Work Previously Done in the Field

For many of the reasons listed above, church revitalization has been an area of particular interest in recent years. Many books and articles have been published, which often include then-current or recent concepts for leadership and management utilized in the secular arena. Essentially, as churches in maintenance mode began to show signs of decline, there were many solutions offered, mostly in the form of recipes meant to lead to the vital church. The basic idea is that if certain elements are put together in the correct order, a predictable result would follow. Kennon Callahan's book, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church provides a well known example of such thinking. Callahan outlines the twelve "relational characteristics" which were apparent in a study of the most viable churches. [35] The assumption is that if you have these "essential" elements in place the Church will grow, regardless of its context. While these elements may have been essential for proper functioning for many churches, they did not guarantee the desired result of returning declining or stagnant churches back to growth. Callahan's leadership style was aimed at enabling churches to function by removing the barriers to success.

Callahan's and other's hierarchical style of enabling leadership eventually gave way to a development of the attitude of permission-giving. Parishioners' spiritual gifts were assessed and their God given talents were embraced in an attempt to let the Spirit lead individuals into service as they saw fit. William Easum describes this as allowing people to "live out their spiritual gifts instead of running the church by sitting on committees and making decisions about what can or cannot be done." [36] As the shift changed to more of a communal direction, there was a significant emphasis on embracing a renewed sense of

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[35] Kennon Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1983), 1:xi-xiii.

[36] William M. Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 51.

spirituality which was becoming increasingly popular for churches. Leaders were to become "visionaries, synthesizers, and motivators." [37] With the implementation of these concepts of leaders as visionaries and synergists, there was an increased interest in planning, but not strategic planning in the conventional sense. Bandy described this new form of planning as "Ministry Mapping." Bandy's process followed a more individualistic ideal, involving more specific and contextual perspectives allowing for greater individual initiative relying on spiritual disciplines and activities. [38] People began defining their own religion with little regard to family tradition. It became a common occurrence in contemporary churches whereby people's needs became the driving force for ministry. Certainly, one could point to the American market-oriented society as the foundation for this movement. These developments played well with church marketing gurus like George Barna, [39] but also had significant opposition from others like Kenneson and Street who claimed that the "form" of bringing in the concepts of marketing would influence the "message" beyond acceptable limits. [40] The mission and leadership within the church had become more focused on individual needs, so much so, that churches catering to specific niches became commonplace.

American mainline churches had long since moved away from gospel centeredness and specifically the call to the Great Commission. This is partially explained by Hamilton and McKinney, "Between 1920 and 1960, the political contests over theology took place in periods when denominational membership was growing....This made it easier for theological

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[37] William M. Easum and Thomas Bandy, Growing Spiritual Redwoods (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997) , 176.

[38] Thomas G. Bandy, Moving Off the Map: A Field Guide to Changing the Congregation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) , 240.

[39] George Barna, Marketing the Church: What They Never Taught You About Church Growth (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988).

[40] Phillip D. Kenneson and James L. Street, Selling Out the Church: The Dangers of Church Marketing (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997) , 135.

liberals to gain control." [41] This is not to say that theological liberalism is not gospel centered or solely responsible for the decline in membership, but there was a shift in priorities that included such a concentration on social justice issues that detracted from the Great Commission. At no time in my lifetime was that more apparent than in the 1960s.

In the 60s the tide turned on membership growth and churches were failing. Budgets were tightening. People were leaving. They turned to business to provide answers. When it came to church membership issues, mainline churches began to focus more on good management practices than theological integrity. Church administration became a key study area for new pastors entering ministry, partially because they had inadequate seminary preparation in this area. As a result some excellent books on church administration and finance appeared. One of the leading books of this kind by Crumroy, Kukawka, and Witman speaks of this inadequate seminary training, although, aside from making a brief statement about being "God-centered," they do nothing to provide for a theological basis for leadership in the church.[42] Church administration focused more on sound business practices than faithfulness. The focus became more about being better stewards of the resources with no apparent recommendation for prayerful consideration or discernment. Church leadership models which developed from this focus looked more like city or business management structures than places of mission, worship and discipleship.

Steven Covey's focus on Principle-Centered Leadership played a significant role in the renewed interest in stepping away from 'quick-fix' answers and management solutions to expand into organizational alignment. [43] Subsequently, with a new systems theory approach

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[41] Hamilton and McKinney, 34.

[42] Otto F. Crumroy, Stan Krakawka and Frank Witman, Church Administration and Finance Manual: Resources for Leading the Local Church (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), 1.

[43] Steven R. Covey, Principle-Centered Leadership (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 28-29.

introduced by Gilbert Rendle, there was a renewed focus on looking at the church organization as a whole. This was enhanced by looking at the church from a variety of perspectives or lenses allowing for, as Rendle describes, "a new language developed out of our experience and thoughtful inquiries into that experience." In turn, this allowed the leaders to "understand congregations by looking through the lens of certain key ideas to see and understand how to respond to the whole congregation." [44] This lens based approach helped set the stage for viewing the church in consideration of its faithfulness. Meanwhile, Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal were describing this focus on lenses in the secular management literature as a reframing of experience. Their work, which began in 1984, has enjoyed increased interest over the years and is finding its place in the literature surrounding church renewal and revitalization. Bolman and Deal offered a "four-frame model" for understanding organizational behavior that included the structural, human resource, political and symbolic.[45] Viewing the congregation through lenses can help direct our evaluative perspectives on communal ministries. The use of frame or lens models can help us view the Body of Christ as a whole, while maintaining its scriptural and theological integrity.

Scott Cormode has done further work in outlining and transforming the lens concept for the church environment. He proposes the use of lenses as layers [46] that can be employed simultaneously in ministry situations. This he explains is a more sophisticated way, a way of practicing more advanced leadership principles. [47]

These newer church revitalization concepts for leadership have advanced the way programming is developed in a modern view of leadership. There is something missing

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[44] Rendle, 54.

[45] Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 15.

[46] See "Definitions of Major Terms," page 11.

[47] Cormode, "Multi-Layered Leadership," 102.

though in the process of moving the church past planning or mapping of its internal and external programming. It needs to move us beyond just offering programs that are scripturally-based for meeting the needs of targeted groups within the greater community. The church needs to improve in its ability to be self-reflective and responsive to the community. It needs to move into developing environments for learning for its leaders and its constituents, and it needs to address the problem of church decline or stagnation head-on.

Anita Farber-Robertson has done significant work describing self-reflection and learning environments. [48] However, her work has not extended beyond over-riding church leadership to address specifically the problem of church revitalization. Her work will help us to move into an arena which shows specific and measurable results of its application. Like Farber-Robertson, the concepts from Chris Argyris will also inform this discussion and development.

Chris Argyris has done a great deal of work on improving the ability of leaders and managers to embrace the concepts of learning while leading. Argyris brings the ideas of personal integrity to leadership whereby individual leaders embrace the concept of admitting that they themselves are learning in all experiences of leadership and that leadership should be shared openly with all the stakeholders. This type of leadership draws on the concepts of Peter Senge in the development of learning organizations in his book, The Fifth Discipline. [49] Additionally, the work of Ronald Heifetz can serve as another excellent conversation partner in the development of this research and process development.

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[48] Learning While Leading is the title of a book authored by Anita Farber-Robertson, based on Chris Argyris' work. This work will later be cited and full bibliographic reference is given.

[49] Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1990).

In conclusion, the works of the authors cited above, writing of church renewal, have moved the discipline to a place of modernity. Yet, the tendency to offer technical solutions to specific problems has left church leaders still wanting. Adaptive change is what is needed. There needs to be a move to an embrace of specific and adaptive learning environments as outlined by Chris Argyris. Pacing needs to be established based on the concepts of managing adaptive change from Heifetz. Renewal should be viewed through the perspectives, Bolman and Deal's "frames" give us. The application of these frames as lenses needs to be applied in accordance with Cormode's "layered" suggestion setting a foundation for our work to begin in the development of a model for sustained church revitalization.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project establishes specific concepts of ongoing communal learning and adaptation for church revitalization. While the real evaluation of a project involving "sustained" church revitalization would require an evaluation over a period of at least 3 years, this project was limited to a time of 8 and 15 months in two separate and distinct contexts. The evaluation of this project was limited by its time. A more valid measure of its success would need long-term review showing levels of membership growth, participation in various ministries and consideration of these ministries' congruence with the stated mission of the local church involved.

The project was further limited by its demonstration in only two churches. Churches of various sizes, geographic locations, and cultural foundations would help for further study and more accurate conclusions. The results of this study have provided preliminary findings only for assessing the efficacy of this process in creating sustained church revitalization.

Since in both cases, I served as both facilitator and evaluator, there may be an inherent bias in the conclusions drawn. Future data collection and evaluation could have been improved to reflect more accurate objectives and broader and more inclusive perspectives and viewpoints. Additionally, there needs to be thought given as to simplifying the steps of this process to ensure that others can also replicate and facilitate similar approaches in their churches.

Procedure for Integration

The methodology of this project was built on significant library research of the ethical and leadership perspectives of church revitalization and organizational behavior. This project undertook library research, case experiences and studies, which demonstrated the implementation of processes incorporating ongoing adaptive change, as outlined by Ronald Heifetz and the development of learning environments, as described by Chris Argyris for establishing sustained church revitalization. The process included the guided development of an enduring mission statement for two local churches, one mid-sized and one small, through defining, reflecting and constructing. In both cases a strategy was defined and to various degrees implemented to bring the church into congruence with its defined mission. The strategy for implementation was initiated and was, at least preliminarily evaluated in its early stages. Data review and interviews were utilized as a means of evaluation of the effectiveness of the process.

<u>Chapter Summaries</u>

Chapter 1 provides an introduction of the whole project including a brief contextual statement, an understanding of the problem addressed, and its importance. It includes the foundational thesis of the project and Definitions of Major Terms to add clarity to the discussion. Work Previously Done in the Field is reviewed briefly to serve as a prelude to Chapter 3 where a more complete treatise is undertaken. There follows a discussion of the Scope and Limitations of the project with suggestions as to how implementation and analysis of this model might be improved in future. The chapter concludes with this brief overview of the chapters contained within the project.

Acknowledging that this project is considering the disciplines of leadership and ethics, Chapter 2 considers the ethical aspects of the project and the way it was designed. The chapter on "The Ethics of Church Revitalization" suggests a fundamental paradigm shift in church leadership from a teleological ethic to a blended deontological/narrative one; a shift from seeking success to seeking faithfulness. This chapter further defines the implications of this change, its roots, challenges and needs. Chapter 2 begins with a brief introduction, a specific thesis for the ethics portion of the project, and foundational understandings that undergird the construction of the ethical model suggested. Three elements for decisions within the ethic are offered which provide a means for ongoing evaluation for all decisions made within the model. A discussion of the evolution of the ethics of the church provides a jumping-off-point for placing God's will as the ultimate authority which defines the church and directs its action.

Chapter 3, "Historical Development of Organizational Leadership Concepts for Church Revitalization," reviews the evolution of the leadership within the church,

mentioning the early church but focusing primarily on the last century. It looks closely at the various attempts to turn the church around in the past fifty years and considers the recent literature for church revitalization.

Chapter 4, "Old vs. New: A Changing Paradigm in Organizational Leadership," takes the writings described in Chapter 3 and builds on them, introducing some new ideas to enhance the model for leadership and organizational structure for churches in the new millennium. The foundation for the development of a new paradigm, involving new concepts in organizational behavior and implementation of dynamic learning environments, specifically includes the works of Ron Heifetz and Chris Argyris.

Chapter 5, "Developing a Process for Revitalization," outlines a specific process and strategy for implementation of the new paradigm described in Chapter 4. It also discusses ways to analyze, discern and assure consistency between mission and action. An annual review procedure will also be addressed, for periodic assessment of growth towards faithfulness.

Chapter 6 offers two examples of the application of the processes defined in Chapter 5. Two churches were exposed to the strategic implementation of the new paradigm and model. The first example deals with a mid-size congregation in maintenance mode for several years. Although the membership was declining very slowly, the decline in children's Sunday school participation had been more rapid in recent years. The process of establishing a dynamic learning environment was initiated from this angle and had some interesting and far reaching effects. The second example discussed is from a smaller church which had also been in maintenance mode for several years, with a slow decline in attendance. It had

recently been classified as "transitional moving toward closure," so the sense of urgency among the parishioners and leadership was high when the process was implemented.

The two case studies provide some interesting insights to the actual usefulness of the new leadership paradigm and organizational models. Conclusions are discussed preliminarily and provide hard data for the final chapter which makes some final conclusions and recommendations. Chapter 7 discusses some of the implications of the new leadership and organization.

CHAPTER 2

THE ETHICS OF CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Introduction

And the Lord said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." [1] The Church was formed, and many were faithful to this Great Commission. According to Reggie McNeal, "Their fervor launched a movement that gained momentum in its early centuries. Between A.D. 250 and 350, the number of Christians increased dramatically from 1.7 million to 33.8 million." [2] This tremendous early growth characterized what McNeal and others have termed the Apostolic Age of Christianity. But this is not just a time characterized by saving souls and adding them to the Book of Life. It was a time of making disciples. The Lord's Great Commission is not just baptizing believers according to Matthew. It continues with: "and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." [3] The apostolic age was about faithfulness to all of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

George Hunter's description of the early apostolic communities is helpful. He describes them as having "adapted to the language and the culture of their target population to communicate meaningfully the meaning of the message." [4] Hunter describes the apostolic church as one who brings the whole message of the Great Commission including obeying everything the Lord has commanded. He describes the "apostolic congregation" as not a "kind of church…but a fairly perennial form of the church" with certain key features found

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[1] Matt. 28:19 NRSV.

[2] Reggie McNeal, Revolution in Leadership: Training Apostles for Tomorrow's Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) , 20.

[3] Matt. 28:20a NRSV.

[4] George Hunter, III, Church for the Unchurched (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996) , 28.

in what he lists as examples of early apostolic Christianity like the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Methodist apostolic movements. [5] Although he agrees that these movements are not at all alike, he does see some common characteristics which seem to be consistent within them.

Hunter lists about 50 of these common characteristics. More specifically though, he lists four similarities which appear predominant, and he continues to define six additional characteristics filling out his top-ten list for apostolic congregations. First he defines them as congregations who study the Scriptures, pray expectantly, love lost people, and obey the Great Commission to the point of making outreach their primary business. He continues with an additional six which include an apostolic vision as to what people can become, a focus on cultural indigenization, a devotion to small group ministry as strategy, a focus on the use of divine gifts amongst all believers, acknowledgement of continuing pastoral care and spiritual conversation for lay ministry, and an interest in engaging unchurched non-Christian people. [6] As early Christians in a world where Christianity was considered a threat to power and influence, these characteristics often became the root of persecution and death.

It was fortunate for many Christians that the Emperor Constantine saw fit to usher in the age of Christendom. With the beginnings established by the Roman emperors Constantine and Theodocious I, a Christianized society in power and influence existed for many centuries. Some say we are just now seeing its ultimate demise with the secularization which we are experiencing in our society today. Douglas Hall describes our modern society as experiencing a "winding down of a process which was inaugurated in the fourth

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 32.

century…that beginning and this ending are the two great social transitions in the course of Christianity in the world. [7]

Great social transitions require new thinking or sometimes a return to the old. Regardless, there is need of an ethical framework which can guide our way. For the Church to maneuver through the complexities of the current and future context, that framework; how we are, what we say, and what we do, must be consistent with our Christian understanding. As people of the church, from an ethical perspective, we seek to "try to be good people and shape ourselves a life that is worth living. For Christians, that effort cannot be separated from what we believe about God and our relationship with God. Faith and ethics are inextricably linked…" [8] With this description of a Christian ethic offered by Robin Lovin, we can extrapolate that the Church, if it is our true intent to operate as a congregation of Christians, must also base an ethical construct on faith. Because ethics is about choices which lead us to "the good," that definition of the good must come from somewhere. Our source as Christians must come from God, as understood via the revelation of Christ.

Ethics Thesis

It is my contention that an ethical framework for Church renewal can exist and operate within our changing context which will meet the needs and further the expansion of the faithful community by employing a predominantly deontological/narrative perspective considering three key elements in all ethical decisions: theological meaning, relational integrity, and contextual congruence. A brief description of these will be followed by a discussion of the historical and contextual foundation from which they were formed.

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[7] Douglas John Hall, The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996; Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997) , 1.
[8] Robin W. Lovin, Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) , 7.

Foundational Understanding

As we embark upon the definition of the three terms introduced in the thesis posited above, a comment regarding human behavior may be helpful. Chris Argyris offers that "one of the paradoxes about human behavior is that the master program people actually use is rarely the one they think they use." He defines an 'espoused theory' of action as "what a person would say are the 'rules that govern their actions.'" And a 'theory in use' as 'the rules that make sense of a person's actions in observation and actuality.' Argyris claims that "People consistently act inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their espoused theory and their theory-in-use, between the way they think they are acting and the way they really act." [9] For our purposes, we make a slight alteration in terms to compare our 'espoused *theology*' vs. our '*theology* in use'. Argyris' comments help us to realize that when we make claim to an ethical construct we must do more than speak the words. We must take it seriously and consider our actions of the past, as to whether we were true to our selves and our commitment to that which guides us. Additionally, it is helpful to consider the future outcome and meaning of the actions we are about to undertake. The ultimate concern is whether they will, within a reasonable probability, represent an example of what we claim to believe and follow. Now let us move to a further definition of terms.

Three Elements for Ethical Decisions

When we speak of *theological meaning* for the purposes of ethical decision making, it is essential to consider whether the expected result of our actions will lead people to understand what we believe to be true about God, our relationship with God, and our opinion of humanity in that relationship. In other words, will our actions demonstrate our beliefs or will there be an apparent contradiction between our espoused theology and our theology in

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[9] Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," 9.

use. Asking the question, "what will this proposed action say about what we believe about God and our relationship with and to Him?" can lead us to understand the theological meaning our actions will proclaim. These meanings are fully contextual because their perceived understanding relies on the context in which the actions will take place. Non-Christians define Christian beliefs by observing the actions of people who claim to be Christian. For example, as a child, I recall meeting a young woman who proclaimed her Christian faith as the center of her being. I found myself, a non-Christian at the time, asking the question, what 'sort of person' is this.

James Gustafson, in describing becoming a Christian 'sort of person' claims that "the lives of Christians ought to have certain characteristic attitudes, outlooks, dispositions, and actions; these are roughly describable and are commendable." [10] Gustafson continues by defining a "pattern of the imitation of God…" [11] describing his version of morphology: "God's purposes are loving; indeed, God's deeds are, among other things, loving deeds. In gratitude for God's acts of love, the religious person intends to act lovingly, that is consonant with and in imitation of God's actions. Thus it is his conscious intention (purpose) to act in a loving way toward others." [12] This leads us to the second element which is posited as essential for our ethical construct for Church renewal, which is *relational integrity.* Being a Christian is about becoming more like God, or perhaps the 'image of Christ.' As a Christian one should strive to relate to humanity and the world as Christ would relate. Following the Great Commandment to "love one another as I have loved you" [13] is central to our faith. The elemental question for relational integrity is "How will this proposed action speak about how

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[10] James M. Gustafson, Can Ethics Be Christian? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) , 28.
[11] Ibid., 74.
[12] Ibid., 74.
[13] John 13:34 NRSV.

we care for one another, how we care for God and God's created world?" The answer to this question should inform our choices and decisions. Through the context of time and culture the meaning of specific action changes, but the way our choices interact with the context results in how our relationships are defined. The degree to which these definitions are consistent with our own understanding of "Christ like" action helps to determine whether they demonstrate what we have defined as relational integrity.

In perceiving action as theological expression, of relational integrity, and centering decisions based on those perceptions, we refocus our choices on being the Church and defining it to others. In defining the Church by preaching the Gospel through action, we serve to diminish the claim of hypocrisy often associated with the Church. Actions become a narrative for our beliefs. Perceptions define the Church's beliefs, in our own eyes and in the eyes of the outside observer, about who God is and how we are to respond to our world by faith. The perceived meanings are dependent on context. Ideally, our actions are influenced primarily by our scriptural understanding. So as scripture informs our decisions, our decisions inform our actions, and our actions inform others through exemplifying the gospel, not just by speaking the Word, but in deed. The incorporation of these two elements served as the foundation for the early apostolic model of church which was prominent in the first three centuries of Christianity.

The third element, called *contextual congruence* is listed separately, even though the previous two elements have some sense of contextuality. The reason for its inclusion as an equal is because it is descriptive of the way most churches are operating today. The phrase contextual congruence is roughly synonymous with business prowess. As we will see later in

this section, some of this is good, but too much can be destructive. Intentional distinctions between business and Church will be made.

Most churches today are run more like businesses or small city governments, than as described above, driven by theological meaning and nurturing definition. This secular orientation has been the source of much frustration for many pastors. They often find themselves serving in the role of manager, while they were trained to be servant leaders. Gaylord Noyce says that "many clergy fail to accept this aspect of the work as important...[they feel] more central to ministry...are the encounters of pastoral care, teaching, liturgical leadership, and preaching." [14] Certainly these are the duties most pastors feel called to in ministry and many respond by leaving the managerial function almost entirely up to the laity. The laity are more easily focused on making sound business decisions within the context they operate, primarily because they are experienced in that arena. With this experience coming primarily from the secular arena however, there are also some inferences which accompany it, which are not consistent with the purpose and foundation of the Church, which is of God. This compensational bias, this focus on goals and return on investment, is often inextricably tied and leads many lay persons to focus programmatically on mission. There appears to be a strong interest in operating the church harmoniously with the culture in which we live, which breeds a sometimes unhealthy sense of familiarity between the two. Naturally, they tend to borrow from the secular success models they already know or have heard about to achieve their goals. Usually this includes the adoption of models that have worked in the past but not necessarily in the non-profit or

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[14] Gaylord Noyce, Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988) , 40.

church arena. Form often dictates content. [15] The challenge here is that the church ceases being the church when it accommodates secular concepts without consideration of the theology or nurturing aspects of its function. Many of the business decisions begin to overshadow the importance of being faithful followers of Christ and spreaders of the gospel. The congregation, because they become so intimately involved in the management of the church, begins to see their participation in the church from a secular perspective. The church, by adopting more and more of the secular milieu, slowly diminishes its unique standing in society. Once again, what began as an attempt at Christianizing of culture, ended up being the secularization of Christianity and the Church.

The natural response for pastors when this happens is to rush to redefine the church, desperately trying to answer the crisis question of "what are churches for?" [16] They respond in a variety of ways too often dictated solely by perceived needs in their surrounding neighborhoods. Douglas Hall reminds us that "there are indeed enough human needs in our social arena to ensure that any organization exercising sensitivity and imagination in meeting them can find a place for itself." [17] An important question however, is "are these the needs that God would place before us, or are they just the loudest voice of the public?" It may or may not be true that the loudest voice we hear is the one which God wants us to. A process of discernment will later be prescribed for making this distinction. Regardless of the source, however, there is a need to keep a level of congruence in society to "stay in the game" or to avoid being a social outcast with zero political influence. Even for the more liberal, social gospel, liberative congregations there is need for a balance between agreement and

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[15] Kenneson and Street, 26.
[16] Hall, 23.
[17] Ibid., 24.

disagreement; otherwise they completely lose their political and public voice, resulting in their complete inability to effect change in public opinion or policy.

Congregations must seek to understand and respond to their unique call from God. While this discernment may include reflections on reason and tradition, it must be centered on an experiential understanding of Holy Scripture in context. This is what separates us from clubs and other non-profit agencies. Let us now turn to a description of the development of a Christian ethic through the history of the apostolic age of Christianity and the rise and fall of Christendom.

<u>Teleology in the Apostolic Age and the Age of Christendom</u>

As I have already mentioned, [18] the rate of Church growth in the apostolic age was extraordinary. This growth happened while the followers were more focused on being faithful than keeping track of membership numbers or souls saved. This is not to say that their focus was on duty, they were in fact trying to be included in the "taking up," with the second coming of the Messiah. It may be helpful to consider the shift in philosophy of that time included moving from Aristotle (384-322 BCE) to St. Augustine (354-430 CE). Aristotle had set a foundation for ethical thinking which informed the Jews and Gentiles prior to the time of Jesus. It would have been well in play in the minds of the faithful for the beginnings of the church. For Aristotle all actions were directed toward "the good life." He advocated a teleological ethic, which for the Jews, would have informed their expectation for the coming of a conquering Messiah who would enter Jerusalem and reclaim the holy city for Israel. The gentiles would seek commonly-held notions of the good and virtuous life with its basis in practical wisdom.

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[18] See "Introduction," of this project, 1.

The thinking of St. Augustine found its beginnings at the end of the apostolic age. For St. Augustine, in City of God, there was a dualistic reality with a clear choice between two allegiances, with no *via media*. You either choose God or not. He describes this further when he says: "We see then that the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the heavenly city by the Love of God carried as far as contempt of self." [19] All throughout the early formation and growth of the Church, for Christians of that time, the second coming of Christ was thought to be imminent. The end of human existence was thought to be at hand. Being in God's hands at the time was the *telos* that the Christians of the early apostolic age sought. The Roman Emperor Constantine also sought this Christian salvation, and as emperor he made it official as the state sponsored religious belief. With this, Constantine ushered in the age of Christendom.

As the Church became both politically and culturally accepted through the time of Christendom, much of the definition of the church became mixed with a secular understanding of life. The fact that the apocalypse did not happen as soon as expected created a problem redirecting the eyes of the Church outward and on the Great Commission. The focus of the Church then turned to Christendom's attempts at domination of weaker societies, often through force of arms and always in the name of the expanding kingdom of God. This evolved into making the exchange of power the driving force for action in the name of the church. What was originally meant to be a Christianizing of culture became a secularizing of Christianity. Eventually, this poisoning of the Church and redirection of its central focus had a devastating effect on the strength and resilience of the Church itself. We will note later in this paper that a recent replay of this kind of redirection has brought us to

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[19] Augustine, City of God, ed. David Knowles (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972), 593.

where we are today. Before we arrive at those conclusions however, there are a number of steps along the way that we will need to address. It begins with rebellion.

The Protestant Reformation and the subsequent pietist movements of the major Protestant denominations were all responses partially, to the age of enlightenment, but also, and more directly, to the effects of the secularization of the church. This secularization manifested itself in extreme examples of selling indulgences, elitist worship, and empty ritual with no biblical foundation. These extreme practices ultimately led to religious rebellion and schism in the Church. The movements listed above, were aimed at increasing the importance of faith and the embrace of the Holy Spirit in worship and practice. All these movements brought the people closer to their personal self-directed and self-motivated accountability to God. Nevertheless, they were predominantly focusing on the salvation of souls and the fleeing of the wrath to come, both teleological perspectives. These Spirit filled, dynamic, and courageous beginnings served as the foundation for what we know as the mainline Protestant churches of today. All of these have seen rapid growth, stabilization, and are presently in a state of decline and desperate for spiritual renewal. This project for Church renewal seeks solutions to break these cycles and provide for processes which assure stability and growth for mainline churches. The next section offers an alternative ethical foundation toward that end.

Moving from a Teleological to a Deontological Ethic

Consistent with the end of the age of the enlightenment and contemporary with much of this later rebellion against the Church, particularly the pietistic movements, were the ethical writings of Immanuel Kant. The Pietists claimed that religion is a matter of the heart, whereby we lead a devotional life of piety with emphases on individual and unique religious

experience and feeling. Conversely, Kant claimed a strict emphasis of religion on reason, whereby religion had to be totally rational with the notion that reason is the same for all people in all times. He claimed that one sees through their experience. Our understanding of what we know depends on how we have processed it through our intellect. It is clear that Kant would argue strictly against any idea of heteronomy,[20] deriving an ethic from anything other than the natural will. Although Kant's claims of complete autonomy are not consistent with a Christian ethic, Kant's emphasis on a deontological ethic, irrespective of its source, can offer some helpful means to establish some alternate ethical considerations.

Robin Lovin's succinct differentiation between the teleological and deontological theories of ethics is helpful here. He says, "*Teleological* theories make our moral choices dependant on goals, so that our rules and virtues help us to achieve our goals. *Deontological* theories put the stress on rules, so that we choose our goals within the limits set by rules and seek those virtues that make us better at following the rules." [21] Kant contributes the argument that we should be dutiful.

<u>Our Motivation and the Deontological End</u>

For Kant, doing one's duty is an end in itself and is not dependant on its consequence or reward. Additionally, all rules to be morally right. Compliance to the rules has to be for the right reason. Kant tries to identify general principles that can apply to a variety of contexts. While he does not try to make all things the same, in the event that they were, the solution for any person in the same moral dilemma would be the same. In other words, it

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[20] While the argument against heteronomy is well argued by a variety of contemporary ethicists, and Kant's argument that moral acts are limited by the extent to which they reflect the autonomy of the human will, approaching and dealing with this argument far exceeds the scope of this project. Kant's importance to the concepts of the need for a deontological foundation of ethics can be helpful and is further explained in this chapter.

[21] Lovin, 20.

would be universalizable for all. But as William Frankena points out in his treatment of Kant, "there is more to the moral point of view than being willing to universalize one's rules; Kant and his followers fail to see this fact, although they are right in thinking such a willingness is part of it." [22] Certainly, we could never conceive of the same situation for all people; this where we depart from a Kantian ethic. We must leave the sense of the ultimate "end" in the hands of God which leaves us out of any true and complete teleological understanding. Any attempt at complete understanding by us could result only in approximation, because only God knows God's own end. Therefore, for us, like Kant, we must rely on a sense of duty to motivate us towards right action. And we must rely on our ability, through prayer and meditation, to know God's will through our faithful participation in seeking God's continual and ever partial revelation.

Our Direction Comes from God

Unlike Kant, we rely on our spiritual connectedness to God and our understanding and discernment of God's will at the time we try to define "the ought" in any situation. The end therefore, is not based on human interrelationship but God to human relationship. While the deontological approach Kant takes is attractive and consistent with a sense of duty to God, the difference lies in the source of that sense of duty. For Kant, the source is the "categorical imperatives." As Christians, we must rely on God to provide the answer to the question, "how do I know what to do?" Ultimately, our understanding of our relationship with God and one another is important to our understanding and discernment. The scripture is primary in gaining an approximation of God's Truth. Our reflection on our own tradition, experience and reason and the current "situation," as complex as it might be, will provide us a sense of what we ought to do.

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[22] William K. Frankena, Ethics, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), 33.

John Wesley, a pietist, evangelist and the founder of the Methodist movement, had a sense of this ethic. According to Ronald Stone, Wesley placed love at the center of his theology and ethics; he was a serious combatant against the "there are no rules for Christians" concept of antinomianism; and "his morality is characterized by obedience to God's will expressed in Scripture and in moral principles."[23] Wesley focused on the primacy of Scripture, while considering tradition, reason, and experience to help understand it. This can also help us define its contextual meaning for ministry today. This reflection can assist in a process by which we can discern theological meaning of proposed actions in the formulation of our ethical construct for church renewal.

But there are other methods for discernment. While Wesley offers an agape-centric or biblio-centric ethic, perhaps more specific to our ethical appeal is the theocentric ethic posited by James M. Gustafson. Like Wesley, Gustafson offers that the gospel accounts of Jesus provide an exemplar for our own lives.[24] But he also reminds us that "Jesus and his disciples struggled to discern what God was enabling and requiring them to be and to do."[25] For Gustafson, this discernment is the starting point of ethics. He seeks specific discernment of God's call to us as individuals and as congregations. Gustafson offers the following for a means for God's direction. "The religious life of worship and of prayer helps to give direction towards the right ends. Put in a theological framework, the work of God's love (grace) both in his creative and his redemptive activity gives direction to man's nature..."[26] We need direction for our lives.

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[23] Ronald H. Stone, <u>John Wesley's Life and Ethics</u> (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 215.
[24] James M. Gustafson, <u>Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics</u>, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 276-78.
[25] Ibid., 277.
[26] Gustafson, <u>Can Ethics Be Christian?</u>, 75.

Although it might be thought that we can focus on the *telos* of being faithful people, we are not capable of defining that on our own. While the classical definition of faith requires the authentic knowledge of God, it also includes trust and loyalty.[27] And to be faithful, our faithfulness needs to be directed towards a God which by definition we cannot completely understand. Otherwise, why would we need faith at all? Faith would have no meaning. The "right ends" that Gustafson describes are the acts of fulfilling God's divine will for our lives. It is about acting through a sharing of God's eternal love. This is acting in a dutiful way for God. Paul is clear that we can know God's love, but we cannot know the end because it is God's end. God will reveal it in God's own time. In the apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he says: "love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end." [28]

If we cannot know the ultimate end other than through the actions which God calls us to, how can a teleological ethic really make sense? What could we strive for? Seeking to bring in the kingdom of God, in our own called and directed way as outlined by God, is all we can ever hope to do. Richard Mouw, a contemporary ethicist who seeks to advance an understanding of a divine command ethic begins, as we do, from deontology but also embraces a narrative approach in a blended manner. Mouw's work is helpful in seeing the contrast between the teleological and deontological ethic and offers solutions to its limitations in a more complex and blended way. Mouw offers an answer to the problem of a strict deontological ethic being inadequate to approach the whole of a duty and process ethic

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[27] Hartt, 222.
[28] 1 Cor. 13:8-10 NRSV.

we propose here. Mouw describes the divine command morality in a more comprehensive sense as "virtue ethics and agapism and an emphasis on a divinely implanted sense of justice…along with the ethics of external law…as diverse proposed strategies for exhibiting a pattern of moral surrender to the divine will." [29] Mouw describes the "God-human relationship as a covenantal partnership that is characterized by trust, mutual respect, responsible obedience, and a free acceptance of obligation." [30] The acceptance of that obligation and the trust it requires, that God has the *summum bonum* figured out, acknowledges the sense from scripture that the end is beyond our comprehension, and that we only can know it in part. Admittedly, the idea of knowing what action is directed by God today may elude us, but at least we can take comfort considering our human finitude in relation to God's Infinite nature and understanding.

God will orchestrate the order of things to come as he creates and recreates his kingdom on earth. The focus for us as individuals and congregations must be on defining our call, finding affirmation and clarifying through prayer and meditation on God's unique will for us. Douglas Webster suggests that to have a receptive heart we must first have a healthy fear of God. He says, "Unless we humbly acknowledge our need for God and obediently submit to God's commands we will be swept downstream by the habits of the heart." [31] Webster is speaking of the same habits of the heart that Bellah describes as "popular commitments to radical individualism, personal ambition, consumerism, technological control, and sexual pleasure."[32] These serve as competing ends to God's call on our lives.

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[29] Richard J. Mouw, The God Who Commands (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) , 2.
[30] Ibid, 18.
[31] Douglas D. Webster, Choices of the Heart: A Christian Ethics for Today (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990) , 80.
[32] Ibid., 37.

They lead to the development of secular habits seeking immediate gratification often contrary to God's will for our lives. Webster says that today's ethos, today's habit or custom, "with its accent on utilitarian and expressive individualism, conditions behavior to a new standard of success, freedom, and self-fulfillment."[33] This commitment to secularization and self actualization has penetrated the Church at many levels and in many ways has lead to its decline. The focus for the Church during the latter-half of the twentieth century was mostly based on this kind of understanding.

For the Church Today

Even today, the focus on being a *successful* church, and the definition of what that means, coincides with secularization. George Hunter confirms that the cause of the decline of Christendom was "a massive 'secularization' process within western history in the last five or six centuries, a process that continues today."[34] Although this may have been going on over five hundred years it has become accelerated in the past fifty years, since the founding of the Church Growth Movement in 1955.[35] The Church Growth Movement focuses on increasing membership as a primary indicator of success in the churches. The founder of the movement, Donald A. McGavran, a graduate of Columbia University and Yale, held numerous positions in the secular arena prior to and during his participation in the movement. In addition he served the church through academia in furthering the Church Growth movement. A close colleague of his, at Fuller Seminary, C. Peter Wagner, describes the ethical impetus for the movement as being McGavran's alarm regarding the use of "God's resources—personnel and finances—being used without asking whether the kingdom

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[33] Ibid., 79.

[34] George Hunter III, How to Reach Secular People (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992) , 25.

[35] C. Peter Wagner, "The Church Growth Movement After Thirty Years," in Church Growth: State of the Art ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988) , 21.

of God was being advanced by the programs they were supporting…[he] demanded more accountability in Christian stewardship…[and] efforts evaluated by their results." [36] The fundamental problem here is that it put church leaders, and not God, in the judgment seat. Often, these church leaders are basing much of their idea of right action on the consequentialist aspects of church growth. If we make decisions solely on the idea of increasing our numbers, we can easily lose sight of our ethic of duty and process, of listening for divine direction.

Micah offers some critique for this kind of thought. "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" [37] Let us walk humbly and let God be God. Let us take our marching orders from God and stop worrying about what it will all mean for us in the future. We cannot know it completely anyway and we end up spending all our time trying to figure it out. We need to be God's hands and feet for the world. God will call us to play our own unique part in the whole body of Christ, in the kingdom he is building on earth. The Master's plan is beyond our ability to comprehend so we must be content with obedience, following dutifully our call as best we can discern it.

A Call to Action

So where do we go from here? We turn to the Scriptures once again to the book of Romans where Paul commands, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good

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[36] Ibid., 17.
[37] Micah 6:7-8 NRSV.

and acceptable and perfect." [38] We need to be open to the wisdom imparted by the Holy Spirit so that our experiential understanding of the scripture would guide our actions. We must be faithful to our understanding of our unique call to whatever form of ministry God calls us to. We must rely on a combination of our intellect through reason, our experience through our soulful understanding, and our remembrance of the historical narrative and tradition to inform our actions. We must step out in faith, knowing that God does not call us to ministries that are impossible, and that others are called to resource these ministries. We must seek and be assured of God's faithfulness to His will and to our empowered mission. We must remember the Great Commandment in all that we do and focus ultimately on the Great Commission of spreading the Gospel through word and deed wherever we find ourselves.

In Summary

This is a Christian ethic for church leadership. It is deontological because only God can know God's own end. It is narrative in that all that we do speaks of what we believe, and all that we choose is an expression of our trust and loyalty. It is focused on a Christian understanding of faithfulness, not a secular definition of success. It makes the "ought" dependant on God, not some approximation of right and wrong concluded solely through reason. It requires that we consider first the theological meaning expressed through our actions and what they communicate about our understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It calls us to be true to our espoused theology, that our theology-in-use would show consistency with it. It demonstrates relational integrity by reflecting our love for God and one another through the nurture which defines us in the eyes of others and ourselves. It sends contextual congruence to a level of balance keeping us effective in the context of our ministry. It

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[38] Rom. 12:2 NRSV.

encourages our focus on God's will, not our own. It discourages focus on judging success using measures which are not God's. It demands our worship, prayer, and meditation for discerning our unique call to ministry. It condemns the secularization of the church and encourages Christianization of society. It assumes the commitment of Christians to their calling and sanctification.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS
FOR CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Introduction

Organizations evolve. In whatever form, be they profit, non-profit or church; they evolve within the context they operate. Moreover, the context and how the organization interacts with it play a significant part in its developing existence and impact. The church has within it a specific DNA based in scripture, which defines its basic purpose, mission, values and beliefs. It exists to work like an organism in its context. The context however has an impact on how the church operates and contributes to the society as a whole. As the context changes through time, so must the church. A church which remains consistent and unchanging is a church losing itself within the context. It is a church that is aimed at extinction. On the other hand, a church which remains aware of and responsive to its environment will continue to thrive as long as it keeps consistent with its basic purpose, mission, values and beliefs. As long as it adapts and changes its operations and presentations to fit its environment while keeping true to its DNA it will continue to thrive.

This chapter will consider ways that the church has made adaptations successfully and unsuccessfully over the past fifty years. It will consider many of the proposed changes whose relevance have come and gone or never existed in the first place. It is important to note that this has been a period of continued decline in most of the mainline churches. It has also been a period of time when a plethora of technical solutions were offered to adaptive problems. This chapter will review the development of organizational leadership in the church and set the stage for Chapter 4, which will offer a new changing paradigm for

organizational leadership. That paradigm is further developed into processes specifically designed for church revitalization in Chapter 5. Examples of its application are described in Chapter 6.

The Basic Organizational Models Used For Churches in the 50s

According to Ancona, the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) identified for his era a set of features "shared by modern large scale organizations in both the public and private sectors and called it the 'rational-legal bureaucracy.' This was the 'quintessential modern organizational form.' It is this form which is the basis for the common social system that has been used for years as both guide and benchmark for major corporations, universities, the armed forces, state and local governments and the church." [1]

This classic 50s model of organization had some specific identifiable features. Positions within the organization were specialized with detailed job descriptions. There existed a formal hierarchy with a clear line of authority or 'chain of command.' A set of formal rules and standard operating polices and procedures were in place. The organization had clear boundaries, internal and external, for departments within the organization. There was in place, standardized training, career paths and reward systems. Departments and even country boundaries were crossed by designated 'boundary-spanners.' This has also come to be known as the standard "Command and Control" model of organizational leadership. There were many advantages to this system including predictability and reliability. It allowed for impartiality and fairness, it honored expertise and had clear, unambiguous lines of control and authority. [2]

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[1] Deborah Ancona, et al. Managing for the Future: Organizational Behavior and Processes (Cincinnati: South-Western College Publishing, 1999), Module-1, 5-6.
[2] Ibid., 6-7.

As the cultural context changed, this organizational model, as we will see, became obsolete as competition demanded more rapid service and greater quality. The bureaucracy became a hindrance to forward movement and within the developing technological context, it found its way to inadequacy. This interaction between cultural context and organizational design can seem rather complex in discussion and a framework. Further definition of the specific types of Church organizations in this case can be helpful.

Avery Dulles offers such a framework to discuss the basic organization and relationships of church and culture by listing five basic models of church. He comes to the term 'model' out of critical reflection on images of what a church might look like or how it might operate in society and in the midst of the divine. [3] The organizational model, first described by Ancona above, seems to be closely related to a late transitional time between Dulles' Institutional Model, with its hierarchical conception of authority with secular impact, and a time of The Church as Mystical Communion. [4] Culturally, with the past transitioning to the future, the early twentieth century marked a time moving from church as secular power and influence to a time of what Emile Mersch called, "the society of baptized believers under the direction of its legitimate shepherds." [5] The society itself was being defined as the people of God or more clearly and biblically, the Body of Christ.

This was a time when Church reigned supreme. Church was still operating with power and influence in the secular society. I would argue that it was still the age of Christendom. It was a time when the Church was still Christianizing society. It was expected that people would know about their faith. Part of one's basic education was to be

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[3] Avery Cardinal Dulles, Models of the Church (New York: Image Books, 2002), 15.
[4] Ibid., 44.
[5] Ibid.

Bible literate. For the Church, it was expected that it would teach the Word, and Sunday school was a big draw for membership growth. Church was working in and through society.

The Importance of Teaching

Of course the cultural context was different then, for the purposes of discussion of where we are to go as the church, it his helpful to look back to a time when it was working. Wilke further describes this time in the late 1800's [*1800s*] and early 1900's [*1900s*] when attendance at church school exceeded the actual membership of the church.

People of all ages were becoming involved in church school first, and then becoming members of the church. This continued into the 1950's [*1950s*] and 60's [*60s*] where the church school was the foundation for new members, with figures as high as 70-80% coming into the church by profession of faith through the church school. For the mainline church of the past, church school attendance was the "gateway to Christ and the church." [6] However, church school attendance for United Methodists has continued to decline since the 1960's, as has our membership.

Other Christian churches have continued to demonstrate that an important relationship between church school attendance and church membership remains today. Many of the faster growing non-denominational mega-churches claim that church school, participation in Bible studies, participation in structured small groups, and a teaching style of preaching continues to be the major source of new members. This also continues to be a major source of new members in the rapidly growing evangelical sector of the United Methodist Church.

It seems that the difference lies in what we teach. Is this to say that an evangelical message is the only draw? It may reach beyond content to include expectation of

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[6] Wilke, 11.

accountability. Mike Slaughter, the pastor of Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church in Ohio claims that new member's participation in a planned discipleship program of classes with progressive accountability leads many to seek membership in his fast growing church with membership of 1800 and attendance of 4700 each weekend. [7] Certainly, this extends back to John Wesley's belief in the late 1700's. Membership in the Ginghamsburg Church though, has some hefty expectations attached including tithing, participation expectations, extensive preparation, etc.

The First Step: Acknowledging the Problem

Richard Wilke helps us remember Wesley's view of the tie between teaching and membership. He states "John Wesley perceived...membership decline as a 'sore evil' that needed remedy. Wesley argued that growth was a sign of God's grace; decline a sign of decrease in grace." [8] John Wesley focused his teaching specifically on the means of grace and the need for God's followers to seek them through action and holy living. To grow in grace is to seek Christian perfection, to be perfect in love.

Personal discipleship growth begins with the self and then extends out to others. Wesley struggled much of his life sorting out the relationship between faith and works. The concept of salvation by faith alone is a core conviction for Protestants. Wesley knew that works had a place in the equation of salvation. What he came to understand and preach was that we come to the faith and are made new. As part of being Christian, we are called to action in the name of Christ. For Wesley and us, that action includes holy living and social action.

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[7] Mike Slaughter, conversation with author, Ginghamsburg, Ohio, 6 August, 2004.
[8] Wilke, 15.

In the mid, 1900s, particularly in the 1960s social action was at a peak. As the churches rallied around the causes of civil rights, anti-war and other far reaching important social change issues, many people came in agreement to rally for the cause. The problem was that they came for the cause not necessarily for the Savior. Willimon reminds us, "Christians have no way of knowing what is 'good' before we know the church. We are forbidden to hold some *a priori* notion of 'justice,' or 'peace,' or 'righteousness,' then to ask how the church might be helpful in enabling us to attain that notion." [9] Many came focused on the cause before they knew the reason the church was there.

For people of mature faith, social action is a natural outcome of their faithfulness. In many cases the clergy and lay leadership neglected to teach the new followers why they were there in the first place. Most first came out of altruism, not necessarily to serve as an expression of their love of God and neighbor. Dr. Karen Dalton recently described this type of love-in-action as "a stance of openness to God's grace that enables us to act for the well-being of others." [10] It was God's calling and enabling which lead Methodist Christians to social action. Christians by the very thing that defines them came in the name of God in Christ to free the oppressed and fight injustice.

As more followers who were primarily altruistic in their understanding of Church became prominent in leadership, people began to theologize about their "loving God" being accepting to anyone who happened to be "a good person," and that acceptance included salvation. The church became increasingly secularized. One outcome of that is that works righteousness found a foothold in the American religious landscape and continues today.

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[9] William H. Willimon, <u>Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life</u> (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000) , 61.

[10] Karen Dalton, "Responsible Social Engagement," [on line]; November 2004 [accessed 26 November 2004]; ¶ 3; available from: < http://www.cst.edu/about_claremont/essay4.php>

Not coincidentally, the decline of membership in the United Methodist Church began in the late 1960s. Since then we have closed thousands of churches in rural areas where the dominant culture has changed or moved away, in urban areas where the ethnic makeup has changed and the congregation have resisted incorporating their new neighbors, and in congregations who have resisted needed modernization thereby failing to attract the younger families. Wilke contends that with the exception of some of the new Korean churches, who he describes as "basically self-starters," we are not yet awake in new congregational development.[11] But Wilke fails to mention that the Koreans are mostly evangelical in their basic theological beliefs and also that they did not come to church to save the world first, but themselves. There is no argument that the United Methodist Church did some wonderful forward thinking leading to significant positive societal changes for our country and the world. Nevertheless, compared to its rich traditions, the social action oriented church had been asleep as far as biblical teaching, and disciple making.

The Great Awakening

At the 1984 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, [12] the church awakened to find itself with an average congregational membership of 245, with church closures averaging 3 per week in the United States. The church had lost 50,000 members and it was hemorrhaging at a rate of 1,000 members per week. At that conference, the church with its 1,000 member delegation set a goal to grow by twenty million members by 1992. The inspiration came from the Koreans, calling themselves an evangelical sector of the United Methodist Church. No one dared oppose the resolution because opposition to it

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[11] Wilke, 24.

[12] General Conference meets every four years in the United States and conducts sessions to decide its polity and vision for the following four years. It has global representation by voting delegations. A new Book of Discipline is published outlining the polity and doctrine for the church.

would be "like boycotting baseball or banning apple pie," so it passed, without any real thought as to how to get it done. [13] Wilke, in his book And Are We Yet Alive, was courageous enough to say that he felt the goal was "ludicrous;" claiming that the church was unable to produce new members because it was "misfocused…like modern couples who decide not to have children because they want to find themselves." [14] However, many were steadfast in their argument that the mainline church had found itself, not in the place of an evangelistic perspective, but more focused on the social concerns of the time.

I would argue that the church had become excessively preoccupied with social concerns, falsely assuming that the average citizen of our country saw things as we did, as converted Christians. Persons who came to join in the fight for justice did not necessarily see the issues in the same way as those whose faith spurred them to action. The social justice newcomers were mostly convicted for philanthropic reasons, not understanding that the church's call from God is about spreading unconditional, *agape* love. Adding to the problem, as a denomination, we became preoccupied with social issues that were not at the forefront of the minds of the average citizen. [15] Socially, our minds were on the global needs of the world, attempting to influence political and public opinion, while the minds of the non-churched and de-churched populous were on things like local poverty, crime, drug and gang problems; the kinds of problems that kept them up at night. The clergy and much of the leadership of the church focused on trying to be the social conscience for society for what it saw as important issues including human rights for gays and lesbians, racism, feminism, and inclusivity for all. This is not to say that working on these issues was not important. The problem is that they left behind most of the membership and constituents in the process. The

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[13] Wilke, 26.
[14] Ibid., 26-27.
[15] Ibid., 38-39.

leaders of the church were counting on denominational loyalty to carry them through this time. But, as Easum and Bandy explain, "denominational loyalty, which peaked in the first half of the twentieth century, had rapidly waned….Leaders either meet the changing needs and yearnings of people, or the people go somewhere else."[16] Spiritually, members, constituents, and secular seekers left the church to find their individual needs met elsewhere.

During this time of church shopping, shifting, and realignment, Robert Wuthnow told us that "membership statistics reported by some evangelical and fundamentalist denominations suggest spectacular growth;" growing at rates exceeding the general population. [17] Americans were losing faith in organized religion because of their preoccupation with taking unfamiliar and unpopular stands on social issues. Mainline churches were declining in membership, becoming increasingly politically insignificant, with United Methodists representing less than 3 percent of the popular vote. Worse yet for United Methodists, it was well known that the leadership of the church "often does not speak for the membership." [18] The church had become so focused on being the conscience for America; it had forgotten its basic purpose and its mission.

According to Wesley, we are called to spread scriptural holiness across the land and to make disciples for Jesus Christ. Somehow the Methodists lost that specific focus. In his time, John Wesley found a way to balance the ways of evangelism and social holiness by first bringing his followers into discipleship and preparing them to follow the ways of Jesus. He helped them understand the meaning of their actions before he asked them to follow blindly into the arena of social justice. He taught that one must have faith and then act out of faithfulness. The opposite direction was merely works righteousness. Additionally, as we

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[16] Easum and Bandy, 180.
[17] Wuthnow, The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism, 48.
[18] Wilke, 37.

act in the name of Christ we are supposed to proclaim the driving force of that action to the people we serve. Douglas John Hall says "Christians are called not only to serve their neighbors but to confess their faith—their reasons for serving." [19] We are to confess our faith to others as we engage the community. The key word in the quote from Hall above is, "called," and it matters where that calling comes from. People are called to serve by God not each other. God calls people to participate in a congregation. God calls people to specific ministries within that congregation. God calls no one to nothing. In turn, God calls congregations to specific ministries within the community. All this to fulfill God's will in community, to prepare the way for the Kingdom to come into the world.

This history lesson provides a partial explanation of how we got to where we were when the denomination set this "BHAG: Big Hairy Audacious Goal" of twenty million new members in 1984 to be accomplished in just 8 years. The goal was further complicated by reverse momentum, which made it even more difficult. The goal included the squelching of the increasing loss trend at 1,000 members per month.

<u>The Beginnings of the Church Growth Movement</u>

To find answers to the perplexing question of how to orchestrate this monumental turn-around, advice was sought from many sources. Lyle Schaller was one of the most prolific authors of the time. Throughout the period of decline, he had specialized in books on church renewal, growth and change. Because of his expertise, he was a natural choice as consultant to the Methodist Church. Schaller offered twelve observations about The Methodist system, which he felt had limited its growth and contributed to its decline. He made the following recommendations for change: Reward growing congregations with subsidies, not declining ones. Move to longer pastorates which stimulate growth. Teach

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[19] Hall, 25.

church growth in seminaries. Focus our care on churches, not pastors. Seek to build and sustain larger congregations. Make numerical growth a factor in admitting pastors into full membership. Reward ministers financially who remain strong in the pastorate. Adopt new technology in multi-media. Establish processes designed to retain young people. Offer a variety of worship style choices. He concluded in a conversation with Robert Wilke that the value system present in the United Methodist Church would have to be largely ignored to move from maintenance/decline into a time of numerical growth. [20] Schaller's recommendations required a combination of technical and adaptive change. Most of the technical solutions he offered presented adaptive challenges, and still today remain largely untried. The values that he suggested needed revising, remain largely unchanged today in much of the United Methodist Church in America. So what are these values? Let me restate them in a different way from above.

Donald McGavran and George Hunter described the values that had been adopted by the United Methodist Church and other mainline denominations four years earlier when they said, "Since 1960 a new theory and theology of mission has seized leaders of many denominations. They are convinced that today what churches ought to be doing is not evangelism and church growth. Instead, they ought to be rooting out racism, stopping sexism, increasing brotherhood, smashing oppressive social structures, and destroying everything that diminishes human dignity. Only these goals, they maintain, suit Christians in the contemporary world." [21] They went on to say that "the deliberate turning away from evangelism and church growth is one of the chief reasons for the stagnant condition of so

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[20] Wilke, 62.
[21] Donald McGavran and George Hunter III, Church Growth: Strategies That Work (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980) , 13-14.

many congregations and denominations today." [22] They rightfully describe a misconception that had developed during and after the 1960's. "The missionary movement, which at the outset was focused exclusively on carrying out the Great Commission, and based solidly on the ancient conviction that the Gospel was for all people, regardless of race, religion…became excessively concerned with other things than communicating that Gospel…" [23] We as a church had lost track of our purpose, and mission. Our values had become confused. "So the assumption evolved that social action and the changing of social structures were *basic* functions of the Christian mission." [24] The organization had evolved, leaving behind that which was its most important purpose and mission. The Church Growth movement would make a strong argument to reclaim that mission.

The Church Growth movement was actually founded by Donald McGavran as early as 1955 when he first published The Bridges of God, which was primarily focused on Church Growth in the third world. The concept of mission and evangelism had lost its conversion meaning in foreign mission, and McGavran was in agreement with that move, until he realized that the change had gone too far. The publication of The Bridges of God marked the beginnings of a "thirty-year crusade to bring the meanings of mission and evangelism back to their classic, biblical moorings." [25] In a later book, McGavran describes the Church Growth movement as deeply theological and consistent with "faithfulness to God;" proclaiming a God who "wants his lost children found and transformed into responsible members of his Body." [26] Many liberal pastors within mainline denominations of the time had adopted the

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[22] Ibid., 14.
[23] Ibid., 15.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Wagner, Church Growth: State of the Art, 23.
[26] McGavran and Hunter, 26.

role of what Donald Messer might label as "Enslaved Liberators of the Rainbow Church." [27]

Their claim was that evangelism was "a kind of triumphalism masquerading as compassion;

a 'numbers game,' resembling more of a 'body count' than a shepherd searching for lost

sheep." [28] Yet they too were feeling the sense of urgency placed upon them by the dramatic

decline in numbers. Messer suggests that "fear of alienating one's congregation…is a major

force to keep pastors" from adopting the enslaved liberator model. [29] Many were alienated,

leaving the church to find fulfillment elsewhere. Pastors watching the continuing departure

may have claimed that some had come to the church because of the social agendas they were

promoting but as time passed, so did many of the faithful. Even the more liberal pastors

began to hear Hunter's proclamation that we are called to "not become keepers of the

aquarium. We are 'fishers of men.'" [30] McGavran and Hunter's theology calls us to make

disciples first, and then to be about "setting their shoulders to the wheel of lifting our

churches into positions of social power, devout living, fervent praise, and contagious

witness." [31] Open-minded liberal pastors found that the Church Growth movement was both

calling them to make disciples, and to build them into an army for justice. They found that

these missional objectives are not mutually exclusive at all, but synergistic. This synergism

is hinged on the theological underpinning McGavran and Hunter suggest. We are convicted

to spread the gospel out of gratitude for Christ, the Great Commission, the Great

Commandment and the understanding that Christ is with us. [32]

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[27] Messer, 135.
[28] Ibid., 145.
[29] Ibid., 184.
[30] McGavran and Hunter, 27.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 46-48.

Opponents to the Church Growth movement continued their claim that it was too preoccupied with racking up numbers of "saved souls." They feared that it was not focused enough on the follow-through of making disciples for Jesus Christ. In answer to these and other concerns, in 1988 Wagner proposed several changes in the movement for the future. [33] Unfortunately, these proposed changes further weakened the movement when applied because they promoted a new version of the recipe for success but reclaimed a "one-size-fits-all" mentality as the answer to complex problems. Wagner recommended that church growth research be systematized and standardized making concepts easily understood and transferable to a variety of contexts. He thought that further development was needed to clarify the theology of church growth, which in turn needed to be communicated. On a more positive note, he suggested that ways of measuring church quality, as well as, membership growth needed to be developed. Finally, he said that there needed to be an aim to find a biblical balance in evangelism and mission, embracing social responsibility and evangelical commitment. [34] These changes, when implemented would answer many of the concerns that had been raised by the cynics. Mark Olson suggests that we should move beyond church growth concepts.

Moving Beyond the Church Growth Movement

Olson claims, "The church growth movement became a science unto itself." [35] He and others explained that the movement was involving all the best that the secular world had to offer in terms of selling a product and the product was salvation. Olson described the movement as adopting marketing concepts for membership recruitment. He lists customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention strategies as being taught by the church. He reminds us

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[33] Wagner, Church Growth: State of the Art, 31.
[34] Ibid., 32-35.
[35] Olson, 14.

that the Church Growth movement played right into the hands of a church in despair. The church did not know what to do so it turned to secular success principles to achieve its goals. The Church Growth movement had adopted a scientific framework. And according to Olson, "a scientific framework offers the promise that with enough time, energy, insight and resources, the church can fix any problem, especially distress and dis-ease. A modern church, a church growth church, would call the fulfillment of that promise salvation." [36] This is a rather tall order, for secular technical solutions to offer that which only God can give. But, many people stood ready to contribute to the developing list of technical solutions to adaptive, value sensitive, spiritually transformative challenges.

At the forefront of this technical solution frenzy was Kennon Callahan, who offered the Twelve Keys to an Effective Church. At the time of this best-selling and landmark book, Callahan had boasted twenty-three years of consulting with over seven hundred and fifty churches in the area of long-range planning. These twenty-three years were from 1960 to 1983 and coincidentally they marked the greatest decline in membership in Christian churches in history. His book promised to help congregations "plan their mission with strong vision and decisive action." [37] Churches are directed to consider the congregation's strength and adequacy in twelve central characteristics and develop a long-range plan centered on the twelve keys. [38] The book offers some excellent points in strengthening "standard ministries" of mainline parish style churches but continues in the trend of the command-and-control organizational structure. This, at the point of the book's publishing, was becoming decreasingly useful in the changing context. In his final comments in this book, Callahan offers an excellent piece of advice, which is quite possibly the best he has to offer. He says,

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Callahan, Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, x.
[38] Ibid., 117.

"God goes before His people and invites them to that future that He has both promised and prepared. Strategic long-range planning is one resource that helps local congregations discover what God is calling them to do in mission in the years to come."[39] So in the final analysis, even in the eyes of Callahan, God is in charge.

Although Callahan's book and others like it offer a cookbook style approach to doing successful church, the solutions offered don't work in all contexts and certainly don't provide a sure way of finding all the answers. They can be however, a good resource for surfacing issues that might distract or stand in the way of a church's ability to move forward in faithfulness. Ultimately, we are to seek and discern God's unique will for a congregation called to be in ministry for God's glory.

A response to this need to discern one's call came in part with a series of books seeking to help individuals find their unique Spiritual Gifts. Wagner believes that "developing the dynamic of spiritual gifts in the church—because it is biblical and because it will help make Christians more Christ like and because it will enhance the health of the Body—should also help churches grow in number."[40] With the realization that God has placed in each of us gifts He intends for us to use, we are blessed with ways we might find the answer to the question, "Lord, what shall I do?" For mainline Protestants there seemed to be some resistance to a strong emphasis on spiritual gifts, which may be a result of a strong anti-intellectualism from the early Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals recruited ministers from the ranks of the working class. Selection was based on a demonstration of spiritual gifts, not academic prowess. This formed for years, what Wagner calls "a sort of cold war

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[39] Ibid., 127.
[40] C. Peter Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts: Can Help Your Church Grow (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979) , 12.

between the Pentecostals and the seminaries."[41] This ignoring of the role of Spiritual gifts

from God also worked well with the continuing organizational method of command and

control. Wagner believed that "understanding spiritual gifts… is the key to understanding the

organization of the church."[42] We will consider Wagner's assessment further when I begin

developing a new paradigm for organization.

<u>The Use of Secular Business Practices for Church Growth</u>

Many other suggestions of "quick-fix" technical solutions to the problem of

membership decline have been offered over the past decade. In the mid-nineties, two United

Methodist pastors offered such cook book approaches: Bill Hybels of Willow Creek United

Methodist Church and Mike Slaughter from Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church.

Hybels, with partners Mittleberg and Strobel, introduced the program "Becoming a

Contagious Christian." This program was designed to be run "out-of-the-box" at churches all

over America. It reads like a sales training manual for a large corporation where the product

is salvation through Jesus Christ. Mittleberg promises that "Through a variety of formats

including video vignettes, group discussions, role playing, and teaching segments, you will

learn to communicate the message of Christ in your own personal, God-given style." [43] By

participation in this program a person will be become a trained evangelist. Through the

class, participants are fed specific scripture to be used along the way to help them prepare,

but the emphasis is clearly on skills development, learning sales skills and increasing

members' confidence to invite people into community.

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[41] Ibid., 23.

[42] Ibid., 38-39.

[43] Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel, and Bill Hybels, <u>Becoming a Contagious Christian: Participant's Guide, Communicating Your Faith in a Style that Fits You</u> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) , 4.

Mike Slaughter went in a different direction. Although he listed six basic needs for successful growth churches, as if it would work for any church, he made clear that it was not just about employing specific techniques that could be found in any successful marketing plan. Slaughter redirects us to a more spiritual and, specifically Jesus centered, structure. He calls us back into accountability to develop as disciples of Jesus. He suggests flexibility with covenanting. His plan more closely resembles John Wesley's plan for church expansion. He proclaims "...*techniques must never be the focus of growth!* [italics in original] The emphasis should never be placed on container over content or task over spirit." [44] Slaughter returns us to the Bible for ideas about church renewal and revitalization. He uses examples from the Church of Ephesus, as a successful church which had lost its emphasis on first principles. Paul's call to return to first principles in that time is echoed by Slaughter for today. [45] Slaughter also reminds us that Church Renewal is not all about numbers; he argues that "until people become committed to being faithful to the will of God, their attendance is no more meaningful than membership in any other human organization or club." [46] Slaughter's voice is a welcome change from many of the technicians of church growth in our time.

As the church continued to employ secular organizational models for church growth, all aspects of secular business practices seemed to find their way into the schema. To follow Callahan's lead for outlining basic fundamentals which defined the successful church, other books began showing up which focused on the proper ways of doing the business of the church.

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[44] Mike Slaughter, Spiritual Entrepreneurs: 6 Principles for Risking Renewal (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) , 16.
[45] Ibid., 18.
[46] Ibid., 19.

In addition to books and seminars, a completely new science of church growth consulting was gaining popularity. In a time when business consultants were a dime a dozen, Lyle Schaller published a book about becoming an "interventionist," a professional parish consultant who would come in for a fee, discover the problems and serve as an agent of change. They might be used for the proper selection of a new pastor or to define a new plan for ministry. They were trained in conflict management and compromise was the basic center of their work. The emphasis is on skills not theological reflection. For example, a good interventionist would have the following skills:

1. The ability to formulate relevant questions
2. Competence in active listening
3. The ability to articulate follow-up questions
4. Respect for the opinions of others
5. The ability to offer realistic and relevant diagnosis
6. The mind of a good chess player
7. The competence to suggest alternative courses of action
8. A skill in challenging people
9. An eagerness to learn
10. A larger conceptual framework for analyzing the data from one particular congregation. [47]

To add a little something about basic knowledge of the Bible and ability for sound theological reflection would be some suggested additions to such a list as this. Otherwise it could be found adequate for any job skills list for any business consultant in America.

Church Administrative and Financial Management Consulting became a popular specialty among retired clergy and some laity. From this consulting work came some excellent resource books for pastors in parish ministry, which have served to help them learn more about the business of the church. One example is an excellent resource book that serves as a complete guide for operating a well-managed church called: Church Administration and Finance Manual: Resources for Leading the Local Church. This book,

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[47] Lyle Schaller, The Interventionist (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 21.

authored by Crumroy, Kukawka and Witman, was written like a standard practice manual, a book of suggested policies and procedures for the local church. It is completely consistent with the command and control organizational structure. It covers issues of human resources, church money and church property. Consistent with Callahan, it offers a complete discussion of planning, but from strictly an administrative perspective. It includes staffing and organization, leadership, reporting, and assessment. Spirituality or calling seems to be generally absent from the discussion except for a page and a half of management lessons from the Bible which is referred to as "the oldest textbook on management in existence." [48] It is clearly a manual for the pastor's administrative role. It claims no other identity. It takes nearly all of its content from secular business and is a valuable resource for church management.

Other persons have also specialized in the business of church consulting work. George Barna, for example has operated a successful business centered in Church Marketing Consulting. His focus is on the use of Marketing to attract the unchurched. Barna is probably the most experienced author of church marketing strategies. As one might expect, his initial and almost complete adoption of marketing as the way the church should approach society, created a significant response from liberal clergy and leadership. Two authors in particular represent the opposing view, Philip Kenneson and James Street. In their book, Selling Out the Church, Kenneson and Street make a direct frontal assault on Barna's concepts of church marketing.

Kenneson and Street expressed their fear that as the church accepts some of the practices of marketing; it may lose its identity. They resist church marketing advocates' suggestions that the church could regain its lost status (in the eyes of the unchurched) if it would be

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[48] Crumroy, Krakowka, and Witman, 10-11.

willing to 'repackage' itself in ways that are more attractive and relevant to the average customer.[49] For Kenneson and Street, this willingness to "repackage" suggests that marketing begins to make a fundamental change in how the church sees itself, its values, and its purpose. They say that form always brings with it certain content and they are inseparable. They believe that the form of the message changes the content and therefore, the meaning.[50] They describe this as follows: "We are most concerned about those congregations who eagerly adopt the latest techniques for helping their churches grow by making them more 'responsive' without pausing to consider fully the theological ramifications of such practices."[51] They claim that as marketing concepts are adopted, the church is changed as well. Surely, as the church attempts to reach individuals, if it replaces Jesus at its center with a "marketing orientation," it changes itself. It loses its identification with the Christ and in so doing it steps outside the Great Commission.

Interestingly, Kenneson and Street offer as the solution to our dilemma of reaching the unchurched, a recommitment to "accountable discipleship." The expectation that persons uncommitted, skeptical and suspicious of the church from the outset would commit to a complete or advanced level of discipleship is hard to accept. However, when we observe the ongoing growth in the Mormon Church, known for its high expectations of its members, perhaps this needs further consideration. Nevertheless, it seems unrealistic and irresponsible to claim accountability as a realistic answer to the challenge of declining membership, especially in light of society's demands on people's lives today. Robert Wuthnow offers some insight into the unchurched that may further illumine this.

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[49] Kenneson and Street, 30.
[50] Ibid., 32.
[51] Ibid., 35.

Secularization and the Unchurched

Wuthnow, in his book, The Crisis in the Churches, gives a realistic description of middle class society today and how it tends to relate to a commitment to the church. He describes a spiritual malaise existing today. He attributes this to the fiscal pressures on middle class Americans. Wuthnow describes: "pressures of working harder to make ends meet, worries about retaining one's job, lack of time for one's self and one's family, marital strains associated with two-career households, and the incessant demands of advertising and the marketplace." [52] George Hunter describes this as secularity. He claims that Christianity has lost its influence in western culture. People within this culture "live their lives, personal and public, not consciously influenced or shaped by Christianity." [53] The church needs to acknowledge these issues as legitimate concerns. It needs to pay attention to the pressures our society places on its people; both churched and unchurched. It needs to offer consolation and solutions consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ and in tension with society's pressures. Solutions to life's challenges need to be offered to people where they will see them; in the media that haunts and oppresses them. We need to offer a light of hope. The use of the media can allow the secular public to begin to relate to the church.

Like the media, there were other major developments, which were considered useful for turning the church around. A very popular trend that came out of secular business in America during the 80s was the Quest for Quality movement. In business, known as Total Quality Management or Quality Improvement Theory, this was the most widely adopted business improvement fad in the past fifty years. It had its beginnings in 1950, when Dr. W. Edwards Deming, working with Japanese business, designed new organizational systems that

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[52] Robert Wuthnow, The Crisis in the Churches (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) , 4.
[53] Hunter, How to Reach Secular People, 32.

produced better quality goods with far fewer defects. When Deming offered the same system to American business in the 1950s there was little interest in the face of the then, well entrenched rational-legal bureaucracy, and American pride and resistance of anything foreign. By the 80s, American business had found itself losing the quality war with Japan and was ready to listen and adopt the then, thirty year-old concept.

The church introduced its own version ten-years later in an attempt to help meet the declining membership problem. The church experimented with it well into the decade of the 90s but it never moved much past the pilot program stage. It was billed as "a total operating perspective and framework, not a program…breakthrough thinking…a structured disciplined approach, not firefighting…long term, not short term…a permanent way of living together…not a 'quick-fix.'" [54] Throughout the eighties, businesses embraced the TQM movement and in some ways it helped reset relationships within existing command and control business structures. First, this change had the effect of pushing the organizational structures of business towards a flattening.

There were significant positive features of the movement which changed the nature of organizations. One of the aspects of the TQM movement was that with its adoption, everyone who you related to inside and outside of the organization was considered your "customer," and you were expected to treat them as such. By calling everyone your customer, even employees, management started listening again to the people "in the trenches." At least they had to give that appearance. It helped in moving organizations toward resetting the concept of shared authority. This shared authority was followed by a general flattening of organizations, eliminating some layers of management thereby

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[54] Ezra Earl Jones, Quest for Quality in the Church: A New Paradigm (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1993) , vi.

improving the reality of the intelligence for managers to make sound decisions. This also brought the vision cast by upper management, closer to reality and allowed them to work in vision, system, and leadership at the same time. [55] This in turn, benefited the lower level employees in that they had a better clarity of mission and vision. In many cases they were able to clarify what upper management wanted because they were able to ask them personally, rather than going through several tiers of managers.

The TQM program and the whole of total quality theory was based on a concept that "the system is designed for the results it is getting. If you want different results, you have to redesign the system." [56] The question of what results we seek and from whom do we take the answer is the biggest question we must answer as a church. For churches, the promise was to be able to "serve and extend its ministry to others better than ever before." [57] The way to do this is to get those answers from the people as to what their needs are and design a system to meet them. The program directed the church to do four things to reach this answer,

1. Listen to people's deepest yearnings.
2. Put together a system that will meet people's basic expectations of the church.
3. Improve the system so that it goes beyond people's expectations to delight and excite them.
4. Act—through leaders—to empower all the people to contribute to the effort. [58]

In this paradigm, the church's vision is focused on meeting the needs of people as the people see it. Like the example of the market-oriented church discussed above, the question remains; where is God in this and where in this system is God's will sought after for the people here? Again, like in the case of marketing, we find the form dictating the content. In

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[55] Ibid., vii.
[56] Ibid., vi.
[57] Ibid., 3.
[58] Ibid.

our rush to adopt the latest and greatest secular answer, we found ourselves adopting a complete organizational paradigm inadequately transformed into God's solution for God's people. The paradigm has value however, from the lessons it teaches and the changes it has made in the evolution of organizational models. We must use care though, to retain our identity while adopting some of its principles. It is important to note that the Total Quality Movement set into motion an effective movement for adaptive change that for many churches may set the stage for the paradigm to be introduced in the next chapter.

The Need for God

The revitalization ethic described in Chapter 2 requires that God be the master of the church if it is to be the church at all. Better stated, the Psalmist wrote, "unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain." [59] Douglas Webster explains that this psalm "implies a partnership between the master craftsman and the apprentice." [60] As we move forward in developing a useful paradigm we must remember that the master artisan is not Barna or Denman, He carries the name of Jesus. God's vision for the church came to the disciples through Jesus, and to the community through the likes of Paul and Peter. But not all visions of the church come through the apostles or the Pope or today's clergy. Dick Wills believes that "God plants the vision secretly in the hearts of people. They cannot see the vision until the person God has chosen, reveals it. Once the vision is announced it must be confirmed by the people for whom the vision is given." [61] We must seek to be builders for the Lord, to allow God to define our vision, and to allow that which we learn from these mentors, to help us make God's vision become reality. Many may still argue that God was

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[59] Psalm 127:1 NRSV.

[60] Douglas D. Webster, Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church (Downes Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992) , 139.

[61] Dick Wills, Waking To God's Dream: Spiritual Leadership and Church Renewal (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999) , 18.

accepted as the master of most Americans' lives well into the 1960s. The 1960s marked a time of significant change, it marked the end of Christendom.

The Christendom Paradigm

William Easum shows agreement when he describes our current era in Christian history as us being "caught in the crack in history…the crack began opening in 1960 and will close sometime around 2014."[62] Others have described this time as the time after the death of Christendom or the "postmodern"[63] era. George Hunter gives this explanation. "The cause of Christendom's disintegration was a massive 'secularization' process within western history in the five or six centuries, a process that continues today."[64] He goes on to say that this secularization process is nearly complete and is "the Great New Fact confronting the entire western Church."[65] This de-Christianization of society has also stretched into the understanding of Christianity today. Truly, Christianity itself is becoming increasingly secularized. So as once Christendom sought to Christianize the society, now the society has been secularizing Christianity.

Part of the rapid decline of the church's impact on society may have seen its final blow during the 60s and early 70s when the liberalizing of the church shifted much of the mainline focus on being the prophetic voice, the social conscience while at the same time suffering its own declining influence. This image of ministry, as Messer claims, "has always been a socially marginal metaphor…The special circumstances of the 1960s and 1970s may have given prominence to the prophetic role, but evidence clearly indicates that most laity and

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[62] William Easum, Dancing With Dinosaurs: Ministry in a Hostile and Hurting World (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 23.

[63] Bill Easum, Leadership on the Otherside (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 24.

[64] Hunter, How to Reach Secular People, 25.

[65] Ibid., 26.

clergy were not reflective of this image in their daily witness and work." [66] The church who's early beginnings were as apostolic witness, had developed into the creator of culture. In our own country, it served as the foundation of our society. But in the 1960s it was losing its place in the lives of people as they found themselves in a world of plenty, a world of distractions from their need for church.

Understanding what the Christendom paradigm had brought to society can help us to understand what has been lost. There were a number of changes. At its peak, Christendom brought a unity of the sacred and secular. The Church's mission defined foreign policy. The congregation was a community which supported one another in the midst of a sometimes hostile context. There was a sense of a need for unity of religion, one religion. Laity played a significant role in religion and it was not by choice, one joined the church by birth. Participation in society as a contributing member was expected and considered part of one's faithfulness. Despite how we feel about these factors, there was an immense sense of inner consistency about it. [67] The loss of this paradigm has created many new needs for the church to interact with society in ways it never had before. In contrast, the context of the apostolic age may be more similar in many respects to where we find ourselves today. It is also worthy of consideration.

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[66] Messer, 43.

[67] Loren B. Mead, The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation For a New Mission Frontier (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1991), 15-18.

The Apostolic Paradigm

In the first generations after Jesus, the church was forming under Jesus' calling upon the people of God to "serve and convert the world, to care for the sick, the prisoner and the widow, the fatherless and the poor."[68] This begins to describe the Apostolic Paradigm. One might make the claim that this paradigm was in the mind of John Wesley when he first founded the Methodist movement. People of the early apostolic movement struggled to discern their individual call to minister in the name of Christ. "It was out of their life in their world as they worked on these questions and stories that the paradigm of the apostolic age emerged."[69] The people were surrounded by a hostile environment and at the same time called to evangelize the world around them. They were called to be in the world but not of the world.

Like the people of the time when Christianity was still a movement within Greco-Roman society and within the Jewish church, we are to be what Stanley Hauerwas calls resident aliens in our own society. In their landmark book, Hauerwas and Willimon claim: "The church exists today as resident aliens, an adventurous colony in a society of unbelief."[70] We are reminded that "our commonwealth is in heaven."[71] Hauerwas and Willimon equate our current place in society with that of the first apostles.[72] The first apostles did not have membership growth goals or measurements for attendance in Sunday school or fellowship events. They sought to be faithful to the Lord. We are told that "in the journey of faith, we have no clear idea of what our end will be, in some form, true and complete friendship with

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[68] Ibid., 10.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) , 49.

[71] Ibid., 29.

[72] Ibid., 51.

God." [73] While the people of the apostolic age believed that the Lord would return before their last breath, we must accept an alternative end. In the meantime we should seek to be dutiful and faithful followers of God, just as they did. In addition we must seek to find our contentment with the same satisfaction as the first disciples. They went forward with a sense of hope with the realization that through Him "we really are getting somewhere." [74]   They were committed to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ beyond themselves.

In Hauerwas and Willimon's follow-up book Where Resident Aliens Live, they remind us of the Great Commission. "Jesus has not called us to hunker down behind the barricades but rather to 'Go…and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them.'" [75] Resident Aliens are called to tell the whole truth about Jesus Christ to the whole world. We as God's people are called to "be a people possessed by the virtues of humility and hope, because we realize that the truth is not ours." [76] We are called to be "a disciplined people capable of holding one another to account so that we give to the world the honesty and humility of the gospel." [77] This sounds remarkably similar to what Wesley was calling for in being accountable disciples.

Contrary to this idea of who we are to be as Christians, living and spreading the gospel, much of the mainline church has adopted more of a fellowship model for the church. Wilke condemns the church for turning inward on itself; for focusing more about being in fellowship with one another and less about the spreading or demonstrating the word. He shares this experience to prove his point. "I became intensely aware of the myopia when I

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[73] Ibid., 61.
[74] Ibid., 68.
[75] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, Where Resident Aliens Live (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996) , 101.
[76] Ibid., 108.
[77] Ibid., 109.

was a pastor. The evangelism committee met, but did not make any calls. The social concerns commission gathered, but did not write any letters. The education leaders complained about scriptural illiteracy, but did not read from the Bible. The Council on Ministries assembled to hear reports from the committees but took little action. The Administrative Board sat in session to approve the budget, but no one was saved. We went home tired, thinking we had done our church work."[78] Many pastors can describe similar experiences and when the congregation is questioned about this, it is merely what they have come to know as church. Wilke goes on to remind us that the founders of Methodism had the same challenge. "John and Charles Wesley encountered the same problem...on the first of August in 1745...a new rule was added...it read: You have nothing to do but to save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work."[79] We need to be as courageous as our founders in this new time. Wesley was not talking just to clergy. He was talking to all Christians. The apostolic paradigm called upon all Christians to witness to their faith. It called for all Christians to work in the name of the Lord. In some ways, with the death of Christendom, we seem to have returned partially to this apostolic paradigm of old. The apostles were lifted up but the lines between clergy and laity were not clear. Perhaps this realization leads to Easum and Bandy's suggestions for empowerment of the priesthood of all believers.

<div align="center">Empowerment</div>

Regardless of what we name this time in the history of the church, whether it be the apostolic paradigm or just a "crack in history," [80] we are in a period of major transition. In times of major transition two types of leadership emerge; "those consumed by the threats of

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[78] Wilke, 30.
[79] Ibid., 31.
[80] Easum, <u>Dancing With Dinosaurs: Ministry in a Hostile and Hurting World</u>, 23.

transition, and those open to the opportunities that always accompany [it]."[81] Most pastors and church members can sit and list numerous times where this has been true in the local church; stories of people digging in their heels and opportunists going crazy whenever a major transition is at hand.

Easum and Bandy believed that this "crack in history" or Death of Christendom, placed the church in a time of tension between polarizing forces, a sort of leadership dilemma. They remark, "The leadership dilemma of Christendom at the close of the twentieth century is that it is trapped between a polarization of 'dictators' and enablers.'"[82] They define these two groups as follows:

> Dictators tell people what to do, control how they do it, and evaluate the
> results using ecclesiastical criteria…they lead people to a goal whether or not
> they want to go there. They leverage people into action through an
> authoritarian command or manipulative guilt.[83]

> Enablers ask people what they want to do, help them do whatever they want to
> do, and evaluate the results by counting the number of people involved.
> [They] lead people to any goal of their choosing. They leverage people into
> action through correct information or manipulative management.[84]

Certainly, no one wanted to follow a dictator and much was being written about the relative success of the mega-churches with the extraordinary numbers they were turning in. There was a sort of desperation being felt by the mainline denominations and the clergy was largely without answers. At least they were largely ignoring the answers that had been suggested to them. Easum quotes Moltmann claiming that the renewal of the church is dependant at times like this on what happens at a "grass-roots level," with its reclaiming of

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[81] Ibid., 37.
[82] Easum and Bandy, 182.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

gifts of the Spirit by the laity equipping them to "replace ordained clergy."[85] With this direction in mind, there was a movement among many churches to redefine who is in charge of the running of the church. As a result, Easum began promoting what he called "Permission-Giving Churches" which "believe that the role of God's people is to minister to people, in the world, every day of the week, by living out their spiritual gifts instead of running the church by sitting on committees and making decisions about what can or cannot be done."[86] While this fell short of replacing the clergy, it certainly changed the priorities for persons sitting on standing committees in the mainline churches.

This focus away from the hierarchical style of leadership of the past moved many churches to consider turning to a business concept called dispersed leadership or empowerment. It also prompted a response by some new leadership writers to bring the direction back to the old command and control style. Alan Bryman, who is well versed in the history of leadership theory comments: "In response to three tendencies of the New Leadership writers to focus on heroic leaders, a preoccupation with higher echelon, and a focus on individuals rather than teams, the concept of dispersed leadership arose to offset these tendencies." [87] Additionally, Bryman feared that the employees might misunderstand much of the implementation of dispersed leadership or empowerment by business leaders. He expresses his concern in his words that, "it might sometimes be viewed as a political maneuver for securing greater effort from the employees under the guise of handing over greater responsibility and empowerment." [88]

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[85] Easum, Dancing With Dinosaurs: Ministry in a Hostile and Hurting World, 73.
[86] Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere By Anyone, 51.
[87] Alan Bryman, "Leadership in Organizations," in Handbook of Organization Studies: Leadership in Organizations, ed. Stewart R. Clegg et al. (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1996) , 283.
[88] Ibid., 287.

William Easum and others also took up the concept of empowerment and introduced the

idea that "it is better to free the people of God to make responsible contributions to the Body

of Christ than to continue to control what happens in the congregation."[89] The battle to retain

command and control in the church had begun. The experience in business paralleled much

of Bryman's concern. Chris Argyris made numerous observations about the concept of

empowerment and its severe limitations. He observed, "CEOs subtly undermine

empowerment. Managers love empowerment in theory, but the command-and-control model

is what they trust and know best." [90] The problem was that for employees and for church

members, empowerment gave the people the impression that they were in control of their

own destiny. But, in reality the sense of autonomy was not real. Argyris gives this

assessment:

> Built into decentralization is the age-old tug between autonomy and control:
> superiors want no surprises, subordinates push for autonomy; they assert that
> by leaving them alone, top management will show its trust from a distance.
> The superiors, on the other hand, try to keep control through information
> systems. The subordinates see the control devices as confirming their
> suspicions—their superiors don't trust them. [91]

Even in the presence of empowerment as it appeared in business, the command-and-

control model merely became underground with its teeth in excessive reporting procedures

utilizing new information systems. Argyris suggests we need to reconsider the whole

concept of empowerment. "Let us stop a moment and ask ourselves how there can be

empowerment when there is neither guesswork nor challenges—when the job requirements

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[89] Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere By Anyone, 8.

[90] Chris Argyris, "Empowerment, The Emperor's New Clothes," Harvard Business Review, 1 May 1998, 98.

[91] Argyris, "Skilled Incompetence," 3.

are pre-determined and the processes are controlled." [92] When the jobs or positions in the

church are determined by the clergy and top leadership real empowerment is nothing more

than a charade. The charade in business is easily translatable to church. It looks like this:

> Employees push for greater autonomy; management says the right thing but
> tries to keep control through information systems, processes and tools.
> Employees see vestiges of the old command-and-control model as confirming
> their worse suspicions—that superiors want unchallenged power.
> Management just wants to see better numbers. Thus the battle between
> autonomy and control rages on, and meanwhile, as companies make the
> transition into the next century, the potential for real empowerment is
> squandered. [93]

This represents a significant downside to empowerment concerning the company's

leadership integrity. Argyris observes, "A great source of discontent in organizations is that

top-level managers continually risk their credibility by espousing empowerment too

glibly."[94] Management never really let go of command-and-control. Argyris points out, "It is

important to remember that empowerment is a goal that organizations approximate but never

quite reach."[95]

Empowerment became a major emphasis of leadership books for the church. It

started a whole series of books and dominated much of the church renewal literature in the

1990s. The problem is that "Empowerment too often enters the realm of political

correctness, which means that no one can say what he or she is thinking: this is just

nonsense." [96] and it creates an environment where communication is hindered, as is

communal learning. Things do not get better because many of the people trying to carry the

load do not understand what they are doing, and what is worse they do not know why it is not

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[92] Argyris, "Empowerment, The Emperor's New Clothes," 101.
[93] Ibid., 103.
[94] Ibid., 100.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 104.

getting better. "So instead of feeling more empowered, people throughout the organization feel more trapped and less able to talk openly about what's really going on."[97]

The truth is that there are specific areas of expertise that the clergy understand because of their training and experience. William Willimon remarks on these. "Although vocation is a primary matter for clergy, expertise is also required. Clergy must know the historic, orthodox, ecumenical faith of the church in order to bear witness to, and interpret, that faith. Pastoral counseling, church administration, and biblical interpretation require competence…A warm heart and good intentions are not enough to fulfill the requisites of this vocation."[98]

There is a need however, to find ways that a higher level of internal commitment can be gained by the laity in the church. "The change programs that could create higher levels of internal commitment and empowerment in corporations do not yet exist." [99] Although the business world has not achieved it as of yet, that does not mean that we cannot achieve it in the church.

Conclusions

Work previously done in the field of church growth, renewal and revitalization has been helpful in a number of different ways. Its greatest limitation has been its limited use. There has been a lot of additional work done in the fields of leadership and organizational studies which has not yet found its way into the mainstream of the church revitalization literature.

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[97] Ibid.

[98] William H. Willimon, Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002) , 20.

[99] Argyris, "Empowerment, The Emperor's New Clothes," 105.

Brief mention has been made of the work by Chris Argyris and Ron Heifetz in this and in previous chapters. We will consider the concepts by these and other leaders in the field of organizational behavior and leadership in the following chapter. This newer and relatively unexplored material, at least for church purposes, will be central to much of the paradigm which will follow in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

OLD vs. NEW:
A CHANGING PARADIGM IN ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we reviewed an older leadership structure; described by

Ancona as the classical organizational model of rational-legal bureaucracy. Ancona

describes the new model for leadership for the next millennium with the descriptive criteria

of networked, flat, flexible, diverse and global.[1]

To be networked is to work in teams rather than as individuals. Teams in the church

would be cross-functional bringing together various sections or departments to get the job

done. In a networked model, sharing of information becomes key to the success of the

organization. Lines of authority blur and individual managerial autonomy becomes

undesirable. Externally, the organization becomes interdependent with its suppliers and

tends to share more information and goals seeking mutual benefit from their relationships. In

the case of the church, this would enhance connectional opportunities between congregations

within and beyond our own denomination. Persons who might have previously been

sheltered from the current members, or potential new members, like programming persons or

leadership, are encouraged to interact and relate to them. This can help them to better meet

their needs and encourage them in their call. Less obvious stakeholders,[2] like community

groups and government agencies, are encouraged to participate in the conversation.

Alliances with other organizations of like type and goals are encouraged.

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[1] Ancona, Module-1, 8.
[2] Stakeholders are those persons or organizations who have a stake in the survival and success of the organization or its effect on its context.

To be a flat organization is to reduce the layers of management bringing the decision makers closer to the front line business. This makes the units responsible for making decisions much closer to, or even responsible for its implementation. This provides rapid adjustments for maximal responsiveness to the rapidly changing context. Improvements in technology have made it possible for persons closer to the front line to make better-informed decisions. By reducing the number of middle persons, the organization becomes leaner and therefore more efficient.

A flexible organization is responsive to the increasingly diverse needs of members, potential new members, persons we serve and other stakeholders. Individuals within teams are able to meet member's needs or make decisions without the restraint of formal rules and regulations, which may or may not fit the situation they are facing. This allows for uniqueness in service; an ability to tailor-make solutions to unique situations. This increases the competitive advantage by making the solutions to problems personal and radically hospitable. This allows an ability to meet the specific needs of a diverse congregation or community. It also allows the organization to better respond individually to the increasingly interdependent and diverse context.

To be a diverse organization allows a means to address and relate to a variety of perspectives and approaches. This better matches the new and ever changing culture in which we live; one that provides for a variety of working arrangements, not forcing people to fit within a specified set of rules. This also makes possible a variety of service opportunities within the church and it allows for numerous places of entry or exit from the leadership of the organization. It enhances creative problem solving within the organization by tapping into a variety of experiences otherwise unknown. It also opens up a host of outsourcing

opportunities through new and old formal relationships. It allows for internal diversity to better understand and respond to the growing external diversity seen in its context.

Becoming global is more than becoming international. Becoming global means using the best of all the world has to offer to get the job done. For our denomination, it may mean reducing the contributions to local missions and ministries, while increasing quality. For our global mission projects, it can mean increasing our personal understanding and in turn, the chances for global peace. It can mean equalizing justice. It can allow for opportunities for mission and ministry overseas, to help better relate to, and respect the global community.

Ancona acknowledges that the shift from the old organizational model to the new model has "wide-ranging implications on three levels: for the skills and knowledge of the individual leader, for the capabilities of the organization, and for the organization's relationship with the environment." [3]

William Easum also suggests a significant change in the new millennial organization. He believes, "Amoeba-like organizations will fill the twenty-first century landscape. These organizations will be adaptive and flexible, able to change overnight. The organizations will be geared toward learning as much as producing."[4] Wagner says the new organization will focus more on the "skills and knowledge of the individual."[5] His description sounds similar to what Rendle predicts to be a move from the mechanistic model of church to more of a systems approach for the future.[6] He says, "Instead of a dictatorship or a democracy, God

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[3] Ancona, M-1, 14.
[4] Easum, Dancing With Dinosaurs: Ministry in a Hostile and Hurting World, 29.
[5] Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts: Can Help Your Church Grow, 38.
[6] Rendle, 68.

has chosen to make the Body of Christ an organism with Christ at the head and each member functioning with a spiritual gift."[7]

The biblical metaphor as Body of Christ has utility for us as we consider the developing church of the future. Before we further explore this metaphor of the Body of Christ, Easum and Bandy provide a useful description of the difference between the dying and the growing church mentality.

The difference between the dying church mentality and the growing church mentality of members shows a sharp contrast. Easum describes the dying church member as ones who "see themselves as an institution in which the members all follow certain rules, undertake various institutional responsibilities, and all enjoy specific privileges."[8] By contrast, members of a growing church "see themselves as a community in which the participants all experience a constant connection with Jesus, enjoy 'fruits of the spirit' which come from relationship with Jesus, and purposefully reach out as 'the Body of Christ.'"[9]

This description will assist us as we further consider this metaphor. Certainly, in the dying church description, the concepts of tradition and habit play a significant role. It is important to know the difference. When Easum speaks of the rules that members follow, he largely speaks of traditions, which define who we are as a people. Tradition likely has some previous theological symbolic expression which has become largely known as "how we act" as church members, in worship, meetings, fellowship, etc. When we consider habit, we have likely lost any sense of why we conduct ourselves in certain ways as opposed to others except that we have always done it that way. When all have forgotten why a church family

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[7] Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts: Can Help Your Church Grow, 38.
[8] Easum and Bandy, 10.
[9] Ibid., 11.

observes a specific tradition, it provides an opportunity for change to a new tradition as theological expression is explored.

Easum's description of the dying church also includes institutional responsibilities and privileges held by long-time members. These persons become the holders of the keys that lock the church in place and keep it from moving forward. Unfortunately, this often causes the church to be turned inward and pay little attention to its context in community. Until these people realize that they are created for God's purposes, the church will remain in decline. "When people discover how God created them to function within the Body, the church comes alive with ministry to people rather than going to endless rounds of meetings."[10] God's unique calling on their lives becomes the predominant feature of their church life. They begin to see themselves as a community once again, as the body of Christ. "The head of the Body is Jesus Christ".[11]

Easum promises in his model of the growing church an experience of the fruits of the Spirit. While this is a wonderful blessing from God, we are also reminded, "Spiritual gifts are not to be confused with the fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians. The fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—Galatians 5:22-23) are given to every Christian, but every Christian does not have the same Spiritual gift."[12] A ministry that is fed or followed by the congregation's individual Spiritual gifts can have an extraordinary impact on its surroundings. Easum promises, "The results of emphasizing spiritual gifts instead of traditional method of nominating people to offices brings a new vitality to a congregation."[13] In addition, Wagner claims, "if you decide to

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[10] Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere By Anyone, 63.
[11] Ibid., 45.
[12] Ibid., 65.
[13] Ibid., 63.

organize your church around spiritual gifts, you are simply uncovering what God has already

willed for your particular segment of Christ's Body."[14] Our new organization, as described

by Ancona in the beginning of this chapter, becomes more than business networked.

Churches become what Easum calls "permission giving networks…freeing and empowering

people to explore their spiritual gifts individually and in teams on behalf of the Body of

Christ."[15]

However, the question comes to mind as to whether permission giving is the right way to

think about church, especially after we have explored the failure of the whole concept of

empowerment in business. Even Easum questions this when he asks us to "imagine a human

body where all of the parts must "get permission" before they can function." [16] The whole

concept of Spiritual gifts can be easily misunderstood. It is important to remember,

"Spiritual Gifts are not to be confused with natural talents. Natural talents are the skills we

develop to accomplish something; a spiritual gift is what God does through us to accomplish

something." [17] So, when we exercise our unique Spiritual gifts, they truly are from God for

God's own glory. The empowerment does not come from the clergy, leadership, or anyone

else but God. This is a good thing too because, Alan Klaas makes the claim that about 80

percent of congregation's primary focus is on meeting the ministry needs of current

members.[18] Churches with a predominantly inward focus have a difficult time embracing the

concepts of church growth because they have come to a point of comfort. The clergy and

laity may at times differ on the importance of growth in the church, or even what growth

means. We should all feel much more comforted when we know that God is ultimately in

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[14] Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts: Can Help Your Church Grow, 39.
[15] Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere By Anyone, 29.
[16] Ibid., 45.
[17] Ibid., 64.
[18] Alan Klaas, In Search of the Unchurched (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), 21.

charge. It is my contention that God uniquely calls each individual, each congregation, each denomination, and each religion. Likewise, Rendle confirms this in the reverse when he says, "The driving assumption about congregations today is that they each have a unique call to ministry, a call very much determined by the congregation's location and ministry with a specific and unique group of individuals, who have specific and unique needs and interests within the greater framework of the faith tradition."[19]

Moving from Maintenance to Growth

Moving the church from maintenance to growth can sometimes be a very challenging endeavor. An understanding of organizational dynamics is essential for us to move forward. In an interview with Chris Argyris, Joel Kurtzman surfaced a helpful method of describing organizational dynamics by making some helpful generalizations, and establishing a framework by which we can discuss the relative changeability of the church. He describes them simply as Model I and Model II.

"Model I organizations have institutionalized a form of self-censorship that is defensive and limits real communication." [20] So these organizations have established built—in defense mechanisms to maintain the status quo. "Instead of telling the truth, people in Model I organizations express only those views that the institutional culture deems appropriate…This causes the organization to receive "invalid" knowledge about its condition." [21] The organization has not just been withholding information from outsiders, people within it are not likely aware of or understand its own limiting defensive posture. "When that happens the companies find themselves drifting further and further from reality.

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[19] Rendle, 6.

[20] Joel Kurtzman, "An Interview with Chris Argyris." Strategy+Business, First Quarter 1998, [PDF version]; accessed 3 November 2004; available from: http://www.strategy-business.com/press/article/9887?pg=0.>, 87.

[21] Ibid.

And, when they get into trouble they often don't understand why. Because self-censorship does not go away when a company is in distress, the ability of the business to repair itself is impeded by the same forces that got it into trouble in the first place." [22] Consequently, "Because the communication loop in Model I organizations is not functioning there is incorrect or inadequate knowledge, and this problem is not discussable. Something that is not discussable, by definition, makes even the undiscussability undiscussable."[23] No one in the organization is talking about the important aspects of its possible future, the challenges it bears and the possibilities for positive change.

By contrast, Model II organizations are more prone to self-examination, self-awareness and openness to change. "Model II organizations manage their conversations better. Rather than censor knowledge, they have found a way to promote it and get it heard. Model II organizations differ from Model I organizations because they deal in valid knowledge. As a result they are able to assess reality more correctly and solve problems as they occur." [24] As Christian leaders, we have a responsibility to bring the organization we are called to lead, into improvement. "Leadership means fostering an environment in which people can produce valid information and choices." [25] But, moving from Model I to Model II can be a difficult task considering the many factors we are working against. Anita Farber-Robertson claims that we are living in a Model I world which "creates structures, expectations, and rules of behavior that produce error, and self-sealing loops of interactions from which escape is difficult."[26] One of the key features that keep us from moving out of

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[22] Ibid., 87-88.
[23] Ibid., 90.
[24] Ibid., 88.
[25] Ibid., 95.
[26] Anita Farber-Robertson, Learning While Leading: Increase Your Effectiveness in Ministry (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2000) , 16.

Model I behavior can be explained by what Argyris and Schon have called *designed blindness*. Farber-Robertson says that we routinely engage in this behavior and that when we see it in others we call it hypocrisy.[27] While observing this incongruent behavior in others it is often more difficult to see it in ourselves. Farber-Robertson suggests we might reread the story of when Jesus was able to stop the crowd from stoning the woman caught in adultery.[28] Moving an organization we lead from Model I to Model II begins when we start to examine our own behavior and ourselves closely and critically.

Many pastors today choose to stay in Model I churches and work to keep them that way. They hold closely to Model I virtues. They do not rock the boat. They do not challenge others. They are not swayed by new ideas. They do not cave in to new opportunities. The mindset is, not to change the way we've always done church. They would describe the virtues just listed in more positive terms perhaps like; helpfully support people, respect people, be strong, and maintain integrity.[29] However, this is just part of the designed blindness keeping us from moving into the much more fulfilling and exciting world of living in Model II.

Model II virtues have the same names as Model I but they carry different meanings. Helpfully supporting people means to help them become aware of the reasoning processes and the gaps and inconsistencies in their lives. Respecting people means assuming they are interested and capable of learning. Being strong means that our behavior reflects a high capacity for advocacy coupled with a sense of inquiry and vulnerability, without feeling threatened. Maintaining integrity means to advocate and act on one's own point of view

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[27] Ibid., 9.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 19.

while encouraging confrontation and inquiry.[30] The Model II world is not a place of comfort but it is a place of growth.

Moving from Model I to Model II is not a change that comes easily. It requires a leader to address conflicts in the values people hold. It is what Heifetz calls adaptive work.[31] It is hard work and William Willimon is not sure pastors are ready, or willing to accept it. "Adaption means movement, transformation, change…far too many pastors are too willing to settle into present arrangements, too willing to manage the church as it is, rather than stretch themselves and risk envisioning the church as God intends it to be."[32] Nevertheless, if we are to move from decline or maintenance, to growth in the church, it is necessary work, and as leaders, pastors must be about it.

Denominations also need to move and assist churches in moving from Model I to Model II. Easum is right to say, "God does not honor congregations that seek merely to raise money and survive."[33] That may be why they come to the denomination in the first place. Model I organizations are not doing the real adaptive work to move forward into growth. They present themselves to the denomination for funding and support, as good Model I citizens we offer it freely and without expectation. When we reached this point long ago, "We needed to stop celebrating survival and learn how to celebrate the Movement of the Spirit, the transformation of our lives, and the giving of self to transform the world."[34] In addition, we need to remember what Easum and Bandy say, "The purpose of any church is not merely to remember the story, but to be and share the story."[35] When confronted, as a

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[30] Ibid., 27.
[31] Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 22.
[32] Willimon, Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry, 280.
[33] Easum, Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers: Ministry Anytime Anywhere By Anyone, 8.
[34] Mary K. Sellon, Daniel P. Smith and Gail F. Grossman, Redeveloping the Congregation: A How To for Lasting Change (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2002) , 100.
[35] Easum and Bandy, 16.

denomination, with a specific request for funding it is appropriate to ask the question: "What are we funding?" "Churches that exist simply to underwrite the budget or keep a pastor so they can survive long enough to care for the remaining remnant of members do not meet the criteria [of the definition of church]. At best they're hospices; at worst they're clubs; but in no way can they be considered churches."[36] Easum calls us to new accountability. He says, "It is time that we owned up to our sin. It is time denominational officials quit propping up these hospices, clubs, and museums."[37]

As one of those denominational officials, serving on the Conference Board of Congregational Development and on the District Committee of Planning and Strategy, I am in a role to effect that kind of change. I was at a meeting recently, asking some difficult questions in an attempt to move us from Model I to Model II thinking. I was confronted sternly, by an elder layperson with the following statement (slightly paraphrased): "You know, there are people who have been here for a long time, and some for a short time, and you less than a year. I think in another year you will be saying 'yes' to everything just like the rest of us." This person provided a perfect example of how we protect our Model I existence, but also, the reason we need to move forward from it.

Much of what we have learned in society and in organizations is ineffective. We have also developed "skills to produce that ineffective behavior repeatedly."[38] Argyris calls this behavior Skilled Incompetence. He defines it specifically as, "using practiced routine behavior (skill) to produce what they do not intend (incompetence)." [39] While our charge is to improve the future of the church in the example described above, the woman at the

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[36] Easum, Leadership on the Other Side, 177.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Farber-Robertson, 39.
[39] Argyris, "Skilled Incompetence," 2.

meeting advocated instead, minimizing disapproval by telling them what they want to hear…a 'yes.' She wanted to show her respect to the people's request by not challenging their reasoning, in any way, and allowing the whole matter to remain undiscussable. She was showing her strength by holding firm to her position with me, sticking to her Model I values and maintaining her integrity. If this is what has been going on *ad infinitum* in all of us, including me, there is no wonder how we came to this place of decline or maintenance. Argyris claims, "By adeptly avoiding conflict with coworkers, some executives eventually wreak organizational havoc." [40] So how do we move from skilled incompetence to competence?

We need to develop new skills both in ourselves and with each other. The skills we need are not necessarily just to avoid conflict with those still hanging on to Model I virtues, but to do something more. Argyris reminds us, "By trying not to upset others but still trying to change their minds, we use our skill. Yet the use of this skill has unintended side effects. The others become upset and dig in their heels without changing their minds." [41] We need more than the freedom to question and confront. "The freedom to question and to confront is crucial, but it is inadequate. To overcome skilled incompetence, people have to learn new skills—to ask the questions behind the questions." [42] And, we must realize that until we reach that skill level, we will not be able to "prevent the counterproductive consequences."[43]

In asking the questions behind the questions, Anita Farber-Robertson offers what she calls a concept, that is really a process, called the "ladder of inference."[44] There are three levels of questions, or at least understanding of the data one sees in any interaction when

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 6.
[42] Ibid., 5.
[43] Ibid., 6.
[44] Farber-Robertson, 40.

questions are asked. The questions behind the questions deal with; directly observable data, which is purely factual; Inferred meaning, which is the observer's opinion and often based on their internal feelings; and the actual meaning, which includes the feelings of all concerned.[45] Reaching the actual meaning can be extremely valuable. An understanding of some of the new concepts of emotional intelligence could help in skills development in this area. A level of self-awareness and increased understanding of others is essential to reach the truth of actual meaning. Leadership in this area can be very helpful when trying to move organizations from Model I to Model II. Daniel Goleman is one of the foremost authors in the area of emotional intelligence and he, along with Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee introduce the four domains of resonant leadership. "Each of the four domains of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self management, social awareness, and relationship management—adds a crucial set of skills for resonant leadership."[46] These resonant leadership domains provide sound means to separate out one's own feelings while understanding and embracing the feelings of others. These domains provide a framework for coming to a truthful and realistic grasp of the actual meaning of the situation being observed. With that, one can go beyond an intellectual answer to the leadership questions we are confronted with, and we should. From an emotional intelligence perspective, Goleman supports the idea that this needs to be expressed in our brand of leadership. He supports an ideal of "resonant leadership which "interweaves our intellect and our emotions."[47] Resonant leadership can help people unlearn skilled incompetence. It can assist in changing values and beliefs and move us to adaptive change.

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[45] Ibid., 44.

[46] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002) , 30.

[47] Ibid., 29.

Ethics and Theology

But, what do we change these values to? The whole of chapter 2 is devoted to the ethics of church revitalization. I concluded from that research and study, that duty to God is that which should move us forward. Our focus is not on success, but duty. We must ask the question now: "Where is God in all of this?" Anita Farber-Robertson contends that throughout history "We have created chasms among ourselves and between us and God."[48] She claims our society has structures that perpetuate that. She says, "Model I is a map that describes how these structures function."[49] Further, she equates the whole functioning of Model I behavior, as consistent with the sin of humankind. She explains: "The Model I map of the world describes structures that distort interpersonal relations, put unnecessary stress on relationships, and treat people as objects rather subjects."[50] She goes on to say that "To the extent that this map becomes the framework for our thinking and the basis for our actions, it teaches, perpetuates, and sustains sin."[51] Later Farber-Robertson back pedals a bit to say that Model I itself is not sinful, and can at times be useful, but only under ideal circumstances. It seems to me that Jesus is not a big fan of Model I virtues. Jesus came to bring change to the world, not encourage complacency. If we are to be using Jesus and the apostles as the example for the church, we must accept that it was and is meant to be a dynamic learning environment. It is to be an environment, which engages the community of believers within it, and the community of seekers outside of the church; a community, which means to transform the followers of Jesus. Jesus is the example of faithfulness. "Jesus' death on the cross is the paradigm for faithfulness to God...We are to take up the cross and

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[48] Farber-Robertson, 123.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

follow…Fidelity is not a matter of efficiency, results, or success, but rather a matter of congruence with the way Jesus lived and died."[52] Living in congruence with Jesus' example is for most people a long way off. In the spirit of John Wesley, and for us as leaders, we are called to help those in the flock to find their way to Christian perfection. According to Heitzenrater this means, "training all of one's affections upon the will of God, having 'the mind in us which is also Christ Jesus…' [which is] the distinctive hallmark of Methodist theology."[53]

This concept of Christian perfection provides for us a way of understanding the endpoint we hope to achieve; entire sanctification, which is having one mind with Christ. Of course, this is attainable only in a moment in time and never achieved in this lifetime permanently. It is a matter of an event or events which surface out of the ongoing process of sanctification. An understanding of ourselves in this light is both humbling and relieving because the scale is so high we understand we cannot achieve it but at best, occasionally. This makes the focus on success less important and the focus on faithfulness ultimate. Faithfulness from this perspective means to come to a point where our observable behavior is consistent with our spoken beliefs; where motivations and actions are one with our beliefs.

Argyris provides a business example similar to this concept of seeking Christian perfection. He points out that people are inconsistent with what they say they believe and how they act. He says it this way, "One of the paradoxes about human behavior is that the master program people actually use is rarely the one they think they use." [54] So, when people see others saying one thing and doing another they are labeled as hypocrites. The church has

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[52] Willimon, Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life, 53.

[53] Richard P. Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) , 48.

[54] Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," 9.

had a longstanding reputation of being hypocritical amongst the unchurched and dechurched,

and personally, I felt it was a common characteristic of religion for the first half of my life.

Argyris labels it as the conflict between the "espoused" theory of action – what a person

would say are the "rules" that govern their actions. [55] and the "Theory in use" – the rules that

make sense of a person's actions in observation, actuality. [56] Similar to people working in

the Model I value mode, Argyris claims that they are unaware of the contradiction. He says,

"People consistently act inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their espoused

theory and their theory-in-use, between the ways they think they are acting and the ways they

really act." [57] As United Methodists, we are encouraged to work out our own theology with

consideration of Scripture being primary, but seen through the lenses of experience, tradition,

and reason. Although what we believe to be true about God may vary, we are called to live

consistently within our understanding of it as Christians, and as United Methodists. I believe

that the theology we espouse and the theology that others might observe as our understanding

through our actions offer a useful parallel to Argyris' paradigm here. So, the distance

between our espoused theology and our theology-in-use is consistent with the distance we are

from Christian perfection at any one moment.

<div align="center">The New Leadership</div>

While this is useful for individuals in following their own journey of faith, how does

it relate to the church as a congregation? It speaks first to the purpose of the church.

Anthony Robinson, says, "The purpose of the church today, a purpose much more in keeping

with the purpose of the church in its earliest, Pre-Christendom era, is that of human

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

transformation. Our purpose is to change lives."[58] It follows that if our purpose is to

transform lives then our leadership should focus on transformation.

In his writing about the new leadership approach for the twenty-first century, Alan

Bryman suggests that this is a wholly different dimension from the transactional leadership

ideals of the past. He quotes Bass, describing transformational leadership as made up of four

components; charisma, inspiration, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

"Transactional leadership is involved with contingent rewards and management by

exception."[59] Transformational leadership represents a fundamental change in the role of

leader. Transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, visionary leadership all reveal

the "concept of the leader as someone who defines organizational reality through the

articulation of a vision which is a reflection of how he or she defines an organization's

mission and the values which will support it. Leaders become 'managers-of-meaning' rather

than influencers."[60] Bryman sees some potential problems with this style of leadership,

however. He says that it focuses too much on the top leaders, that too little is said about

informal leadership processes, there is little situational analysis, and there is a problem with

causality and implicit leadership theories with too much emphasis placed on the exploits of

successful leaders.[61] Many lessons can be learned from failed transformational leadership

attempts, but what might it look like when applied to the church and how might we avoid

these pitfalls? William Willimon offers a Christian description of this leadership paradigm.

"In a Christian context, I would say that being a transformative leader means believing that

God is always making all things new, even us, and that conversion, change, transformation is

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[58] Anthony B. Robinson, Transforming Congregational Culture (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 33.

[59] Bryman, "Leadership in Organizations," 282-83.

[60] Ibid., 280.

[61] Ibid.

a typical, expected gift of faith."[62] From a Christian perspective, the ultimate top-manager is

God. The direction comes from the top via discernment. It provides an attitude that is

focused on growing and learning more about how to receive that direction. Jim Herrington

describes the potential advantages to congregations when he describes its effect on groups,

"For transformational leaders, learning expands a group's capacity to achieve its desired

results. New information may help to increase the team's capacity to meet its goals, but this

information is a means to a larger end."[63]

Bryman's concerns about transformational leadership are valid, and will be addressed

through the design of the leadership paradigm in the next chapter to prevent them from

becoming problematic or destructive. The direction we will be going to establish a dynamic

learning environment for all participants will deal with most of the potential pitfalls.

The New Organization

Moving towards the Model II church is not as simple as applying some technical

alteration in organizational structure, or programming. Change for the church to move to real

congregational revitalization will need to get to the level of cultural change. Anthony

Robinson understands culture, "in an anthropological sense, to mean the thick network of

symbols, language, and behaviors that characterize the human community."[64] By its very

nature, "Leadership is intertwined with culture formation." [65] But change at this level will

pose an adaptive challenge. Adaptive change requires motivation to fuel it. It requires

pressure and a means to monitor and control it. Heifetz describes the process. "First, a leader

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[62] Willimon, Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry, 279.

[63] Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem and James H. Furr, Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000) , 129.

[64] Robinson, 33.

[65] Peter Senge, "The Leader's New Work: Building Learning Organizations," Sloan Management Review, Fall 1990, 10.

must create what can be called a holding environment. To use the analogy of a pressure cooker, a leader needs to regulate the pressure by turning up the heat while also allowing some steam to escape." [66] "Without some pressure, some pinch of reality, adaptive work is unlikely to happen. If people, to put it another way, are too comfortable, nothing will change."[67] This makes the initiation, or the fueling of the fire of change similar to the work of a prophet.[68] Whether they are prophet, teacher, or preacher, "...leadership is not a list of characteristics, but an event involving more than one person that motivates individuals passionately to pursue a direction."[69] If the leader is going to be successful in moving the church towards a significant change in culture, they are going to have to be well prepared for the process.

New Requirements of Leaders

The problem is that few leaders are well prepared for transformational leadership, mostly because they have not been indoctrinated in that way. When placed in a position of leadership over an event our natural response is to focus on what Argyris calls Single-loop learning, which is "responding to a situation based on knowledge and experience, reflecting only on the situation." Double-loop learning is "reflecting on the situation and the role oneself plays to consider personal definitions of normative states in the process." [70] Like in the situation of the ladder of inference when dealing with others and asking the questions behind the questions, we need to ask these same questions of ourselves. We must understand the role we might be playing in changing the meaning of the situation at hand? If we are to see the adaptive challenge in its actuality, we must get far enough back to see the big picture,

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[66] Ronald Heifetz, "The Work of Leadership," Harvard Business Review, 1 Feb. 1997, 127.
[67] Robinson, 21.
[68] Ibid., 22.
[69] Easum and Bandy, 183.
[70] Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," 6.

including how we relate to it. In other words, "If a pastor is to maintain a capacity to lead the congregation, she or he must keep a certain cultural distance from it."[71] Heifetz calls it getting in the balcony. "Without the capacity to move back and forth between the field of action and the balcony, to reflect day to day, moment to moment, on the many ways in which an organization's habits can sabotage adaptive work, a leader easily and unwittingly becomes a prisoner of the system." [72] When the leader's reflection moves from situation-centered to double-loop learning where the leader, and everyone else, questions their own assumptions and behavior[73] extraordinary things happen. Preconceived ideas and solutions find their way to the trash and real learning begins. Certainly, leaders keep returning to struggle with defensive routines they have long since established, but the transformative leader of a dynamic learning environment steps back even from their own actions to reflect on their usefulness. It is a constant challenge of self-awareness and reconsideration, but the benefits are in transformed lives to Christ.

Meaning Making

The basis of transformative leadership and the most natural responsibility of a pastor is the making of meaning. For the transformative leader, this is central to their work. Meaning making is more than merely casting a vision. Although it might include that, it is bringing symbolism, ritual and the reality of God to the people in their modern context. It is as natural to humankind as breathing. It was the first responsibility of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Drath and Palus define meaning making as, "the process of creating names,

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[71] George B. Thompson, Jr., How to Get Along With Your Church: Creating Cultural Capital for Doing Ministry (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001) , 42.
[72] Heifetz, "The Work of Leadership," 126.
[73] Argyris, "Good Communication That Blocks Learning," 79.

interpretations and commitments." [74] For leaders they add, "the aspect of believing and valuing, and thus committing." [75] "Meaning-making is about constructing a sense of what is, what actually exists, and of that, what is important." [76] Because "Leadership is a shared human process," [77] the process of making meaning is also shared. To lead a group within the church, which represents the Body on any particular quest, meaning making should be part of the process. When habit has replaced tradition, or tradition has lost its salt, the process of meaning making is needed to reestablish the theological symbolism that the church needs for its cultural definition. Meaning making tells the story of the church. Meaning making redirects the actions of the church. Meaning making is what defines the church from its neighbors and its secular counterparts. Recently, I introduced the workers who had come to serve the homeless at a shelter dinner. A simple introduction brings meaning to the event. Two groups were present to provide food, there were people from the Key Club at the local high school and members from our church. Prior to the prayer, I introduced the "Volunteers" from the Key Club and the "Servant Ministers" from the church. When the Worship Committee expressed their concerns about the spread of germs when I tore the bread off the loaf to hand it to them during communion, I replied with the following explanation: "When I tear the bread and hand it to you, I am reminded that I am here to serve you. I hope in receiving the holy meal in your outstretched hand, you will realize it is given to you without price." What we call ourselves and how we see simple acts of grace deepens the theological expression of our lives. "With the shift to seeing meaning making as the basis of leadership, influence is no longer considered the essence of leadership; it becomes, rather, an outcome of

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[74] Wilfred H. Drath and Charles J. Palus, Making Common Sense: Leadership as Meaning-making in a Community of Practice (Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership Press, 1994, 2001), 9.
[75] Ibid., 8.
[76] Ibid., 9.
[77] Ibid., 6.

leadership....Influence arises as people in the community of practice make commitments to one another and thus allow others to make claims on them."[78]

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[78] Ibid., 14.

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR REVITALIZATION

<u>Introduction</u>

An organizational paradigm that can be applied to a church to move it from Model I to Model II status and then to maintain Model II operation for sustained church revitalization cannot be static. It must fluid and adaptable. It also must be described as the ideal to be developed over a long period of time. It needs to be simple enough to be understood and implemented by almost anyone in leadership. It needs to operate as a dynamic learning environment for the leadership and all other stakeholders. Leadership needs to be responsive to personal spiritual needs, yet challenging to complacency. In the words of Bishop Kennedy, leaders need to both comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. The center of the paradigm cannot be its organizational structure because that too must remain fluid to meet the changing needs and growth of the congregation. The consistency of the organization is centered in processes, which transcend the growth phases experienced by the denomination, the congregation, the individuals growing within, the persons served outside, and the microcosms affected by them all. All of this is centered and directed by the growing ability of each participant to understand and respond to God's call on them, and their collective lives.

This organizational model continually seeks its present and future direction from God. It operates through creative and transforming community engagement processes. These processes maintain a learning environment through the periodic use of a cycle of definitive, reflective, constructive and strategic reflection; leading to faithful action. These processes are at times formal and other times informal. The cycle of reflection is used for

specific and wide reaching situational analysis mostly through *ad hoc* committees of teams, and task forces of the main decision-making body of the church. There is an expectation that part of the growth of each individual will be an understanding of Double-loop learning. Defensive routines will be confronted. The lay and clergy leadership practice Model II values and interaction through their participation in task forces and *ad hoc* committees. The ladder of inference is used as a tool for getting to the actuality of issues and questions. These practices should help to minimize implicit leadership theories and causality.

Transformative leadership, with its basis in meaning making, will focus on preparing participants for greater openness to God's call and seek to enable the answer to it. The leadership will also seek to find affirmations from others on the specific call to the congregation in the community. The congregation is encouraged to creatively engage the communities surrounding the church, in the town, within the church, and within their own personal microcosm of life, in the name of Christ. The lay and clergy leadership are taught, and teach these concepts, values, and beliefs through the meaning making processes made available through the pulpit, printed material, classes, and interaction surrounding meetings and fellowship.

<u>Reflection that Makes Us Church</u>

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal, in their popular book, <u>Reframing Organizations</u> introduce the concept of frames so that the same situation can be viewed in at least four different ways.[1] They choose the word frames because "they are both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus. Frames filter out some things while allowing others to pass through easily. Frames help us order experience and decide what to do."[2] The

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[1] Bolman and Deal, xiii.
[2] Ibid., 12.

frames they selected for evaluation of business models were the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political perspective, and the symbolic frame. "The structural frame emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships."[3] "The human resource frame...sees an organization as much like an extended family, inhabited by individuals who have needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations."[4] "political perspective...sees organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles. Different interests compete for power and scarce resources."[5] "The symbolic frame, drawing on social and cultural anthropology, treats organizations as tribes, theaters, or carnivals."[6] This four-frame model is obviously best used in evaluating situations for business. Different frames might be chosen for different types of organizations.

Scott Cormode, while discussing models of leadership including the Builder, Shepherd and Gardener, suggests that the advanced leader will note that every ministering situation has in it, elements of all three frames. He suggests that frames are better considered as layers and offers three layers for consideration; the organizational, community, and spiritual / theological.[7] In an unpublished work from the same author, he further describes the process "in that a leader must account at one time for pastoral concerns about individual persons, for organizational concerns about the community and about spiritual concerns about theology."[8] Cormode explains, "The reason that this layered approach is important is that leaders often find that the requirements of the various layers conflict with each other."[9] This

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[3] Ibid., 13.
[4] Ibid., 14.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Scott Cormode, "Multi-Layered Leadership: The Christian as Builder, Shepherd, and Gardener," Journal of Religious Leadership 1, no.2 (Fall 2002) : 102-03.
[8] Scott Cormode, "A *Telos* for Theological Education: Constructing Faithful Action," photocopy (Claremont: Claremont School of Theology, n.d.) , 10.
[9] Ibid., 11.

concept of frames, layers and reflection is attractive and useful for the paradigm I have built. The layers I have chosen are similar to Cormode's. They are the described in the chapter on ethics and are as follows: theological meaning, relational integrity, and contextual congruence. Whenever faced with a situation where a decision is begging an answer, we as a congregation ask three questions addressing these layers. First, considering the theological question, "If we do this, what will this choice say about what we believe about God and ourselves in relation to God?" Secondly, and after we have asked the first question, we ask, "What will it say about our love for one another and how we answer the Great Commandment to love thy neighbor?" Thirdly, and finally we ask, "Is this good stewardship or a good business decision for the church?" This process addresses the need for us to consider constantly our journey to Christian perfection. In other words, it causes us to consider whether our espoused theology and theology-in-use are consistent. It is a theologizing for every decision of the church. It is presented in the form of meaning making as that which defines us as church as opposed to say a business, a city government or a social club. It is useful to note the order of consideration as well. I have found that if we ask the questions in this order, which is likely opposite from a secular preference, it causes the people to rethink the situation. As I describe in the following chapter in the section considering case study II, you may note its usefulness. While embracing these three layers for consideration of nearly all basic decisions, the process is only partially useful when adaptive challenges are large and difficult for the church.

Managing Adaptive Challenges

A person in authority, like the transformative leader, must make the call as to how situations are handled, at least initially. "Leaders do not need to know all the answers. They do need to ask the right questions." [10] The key question follows: "An authority figure exercising leadership has to tell the difference between technical and adaptive situations because they require different responses. She must ask the key differentiating question: Does making progress on this problem require changes in people's values, attitudes, or habits of behavior?" [11]

The severity of the problem encountered, can be a helpful consideration when evaluating the way in which it is best addressed. Ron Heifetz describes three types of problems in the following description: "Type I situations are clearly defined and require technical solutions. Type II situations are clearly defined and require both technical and adaptive solutions. Type III situations require learning to define them and require adaptive solutions." [12] The situations themselves are seldom simple and many can be taken apart to be handled by a variety of methods. Heifetz explains,

> "In working toward an adaptive solution, it is helpful to break the problem
> down into definable and more technical components. Potentially unchanging
> conditions of the situation should be defined to avoid defining the conditions,
> themselves, as problems. These conditions require technical expertise and are
> Type I. Still other parts of the situation could be clearly defined, but no expert
> could solve them alone; these are Type II." [13]

What's left, problems not clearly definable require additional learning, attitude changes and habit changes.

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[10] Heifetz, "The Work of Leadership," 124.

[11] Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 87.

[12] Ibid., 76.

[13] Ibid., 84.

While Types I and II can often be answered by our layered reflection, Type III require additional work to prepare the church for dealing with the changes necessary. But along the way the situation can be reconsidered as above. "As learning takes place, Type III situations may be broken down partially, if not completely into Type II and Type I components. This involves both process and technical expertise." [14] In order for real learning to happen, however, the majority of the church may need to be involved. Heifetz has this to say about the break down of authority. "Formal authority can serve as a background for informal authority which must be given and maintained." [15] "With adaptive problems, authority must look beyond authoritative solutions." [16]

While the reflective layer process listed above may act as a mini-holding environment wherever it is used, larger situations which need adaptive change by the stakeholders require something more. Our leadership paradigm includes a process by which we prepare and maintain holding environments as previously mentioned in the form of *ad hoc* committees of ministry teams and task forces attached to the main decision making body of the organization.

These temporary adaptive change vehicles are set up to work the stakeholders through the process of change. They are temporary and assigned to complete the adaptive work, but remain in effect until it is done. In some cases, these temporary sub-organizations may work beyond adaptive change to include generative learning. Peter Senge describes this as follows: "Leading corporations are focusing on generative learning, which is about creating, as well as adaptive learning which is about coping." [17] Case Study I, in the next chapter,

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[14] Ibid., 88.
[15] Ibid., 83.
[16] Ibid., 87.
[17] Peter Senge, "The Leader's New Work: Building Learning Organizations," 8.

provides an example of this type of learning when a task force for studying Sunday school decline ended up changing the entire face of the Sunday morning experience including worship times and styles.

<u>Moving to Faithful Action</u>

The task force model needs a process for it to operate, as well. This process of adaptive change needs to assist the church in finding God's call on the congregation. Scott Cormode has spent a great deal of effort developing a model after much research. He describes his process as the construction of faithful action. After reviewing models for moving from experience to action from Browning, Groome, Kolb and Mezirow, he developed the following model, which is shown in the schematic below:
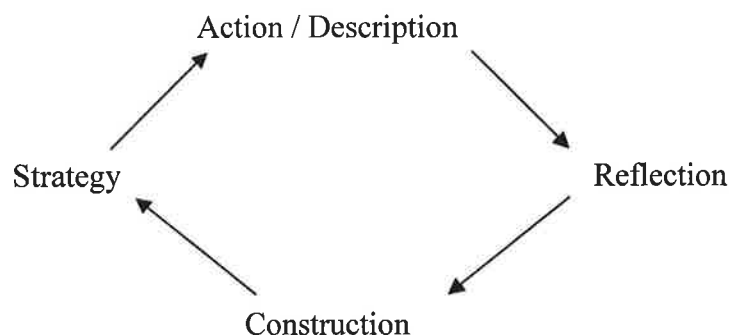
Action / Description

Strategy   Reflection

Construction

Diagram 1: Cormode's Model for Faithful Action[18]

Cormode claims that the structure is designed to promote unity and coherence. The process connects reflection on experience with strategies for action. The process moves from description to reflection to construction to strategy and then, if necessary, begins again. Cormode's intent is that it be "a model for constructing faithful action."[19] Of course, our

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[18] Cormode, "A *Telos* for Theological Education: Constructing Faithful Action," 8.
[19] Ibid., 9.

layered reflection plays a role here as well at Cormode's recommendation. "At each point along the process of constructing faithful action there needs to be a layered approach to theologizing." [20] The use and usefulness of this process is also described in the following chapter in Case Study I. This process far exceeded expectations and went beyond adaptive change for the group who employed it to include the generative learning mentioned above. I have also facilitated this process at other venues including a six-month visioning process for the Ventura County Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, which now has a sense of direction, where before it was adrift.

Measurement of the use of these processes is like trying to measure faithfulness because in reality that is exactly we are talking about. How does one measure faithfulness? Certainly, there are indicators that things are working. These might include increases in membership, attendance, giving, and participation in missions and fellowship. Other measures include the congregational assessment conducted annually by the Annual Conference in The United Methodist Church, which describes more completely areas for improvement and grades the relative vitality of the congregations. All of these provide for an understanding of health of the congregation but are merely indicators of the fruits of solid ministry. Nancy Ammerman provides a process of studying congregations to asses them, and probably does better that anyone in terms of getting a realistic picture of what is really happening. But, the question still remains, how do we assess faithfulness, especially when we are basing it on our own understanding of God's will for that which we measure. Truly measuring it could be only measuring our ability to be correct in our discernment process. Or, in the case of assessing one's growth through a period of adaptive change, the questioning process itself would be part of the learning and the results would be partially and

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[20] Ibid., 11.

variably indicating the effectiveness of the questioning process on the learning process. It has become clear that a true assessment of faithfulness is not reachable.

So without assessment, how do we find reassurance that we are moving in the right direction? Throughout the process of this professional project, I have found myself asking this question and being satisfied with the assurance of the answer. While moving forward in the congregation and denomination toward faithful ministry, I have found comfort in the many conversation partners I have engaged. I am not speaking of friends necessarily, but of the many authors who have written so well and so prolifically. In remaining in conversation with them and with live mentors along the way, I have only found comfort, but not an objective answer to the measurement problem. If we continue to reflect consistently, always returning to our own self-awareness and spending adequate time in the balcony, as Heifetz describes, we can find our assurance of faithfully answering the call that God puts upon us. This assessment from God through prayer and Christian conversation with the experts will be the grace we need. And, God's grace is sufficient for now.

CHAPTER 6

APPLICATION OF THE PROCESS

Introduction

The process of congregational study employs the concept of practical theology, which for Nancy Ammerman, includes a moving from congregational life to theology and then back to congregational life. She claims that "theology does not exist in the abstract; it is always rooted in context. Knowledge of that context is part of theology itself." [1] This is a way by which we engage the community of the church both socially and theologically.

When we move to understand the theology of a particular congregation it is important to consider both the explicit theology and the implicit theology. [2] An implicit theology may guide a congregation more than the explicit theology expressed in a mission or doctrinal statement. It may reflect truths about the congregation that no one really wants to hear. Ammerman expresses the need to uncover the implicit theology with the explicit in order to gain a thorough understanding of the congregation. [3]

It is also important to note that there are likely to be a variety of implicit theologies at work within the whole congregation which form a mosaic of theologies which to some extent drive the whole. These "fragments" may have been developed in diverse ways and to different extents and may be understood through a range of theological perspectives. These theological perspectives have to do with personal knowledge experience gained both inside and outside the congregational context.

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[1] Nancy T. Ammerman, et al., eds. Studying Congregations: A New Handbook (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) , 26.

[2] *Explicit Theology* is defined here as that which is that which is considered "official," like the denominational or stated beliefs. *Implicit Theology* is the "unofficial theology" that guides much action. This may be unspoken and undiscussable. It may be related to a "theology–in-use."

[3] Ammerman, 31.

An analysis of the congregation in order to surface the reality of its theological perspectives needs to consider that which formed it. Therefore, a sense of the history of the congregation is helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of its theology-in-use. To engage its belief system, its espoused theology, we must seek to understand the vision it claims; how it sees itself in the community.

The question takes on a new meaning when we ask where the vision came from? From our discussion of ethics in Chapter 2, we know that the vision of each congregation is God's unique gift. James Harnish makes this comment about the congregation's unique vision and mission. "The gift of the Holy Spirit to the early church was the gift of a dream, a Spirit-impregnated vision of God's mission to carry the good news of the love of God in Christ to the whole world. And the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the church today is to plant that same sense of mission and vision in the heart of every congregation."[4] The vision and mission for the whole church has not changed, but it still allows for specific expressions and sub roles for congregations within the greater mission of the Church.

As we describe the following case studies, it will be helpful to observe the reorientation to a mission centered focus which can provide the framework for the development of dynamic learning environments. The experience of the Spiritual journey occurs both for the congregants and the congregational community. Both levels are at play simultaneously. And even beyond our treatise here the same is occurring beyond the local church, in the relationships within and between denominations throughout the kingdom of God.

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[4] James A. Harnish, You Only Have to Die: Leading Your Congregation to New Life (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004) , 62.

Case Study I: The United Methodist Church, Simi Valley

Description of Local Church

Although the legal name for the church is as listed above, the congregation in recent years has referred to itself as "Simi Valley United Methodist Church." Textually this suggests more of an emphasis on the church's role in the community. The community of Simi Valley is located just over the hill from the Los Angeles basin. It is the first community west of the Los Angeles Unified School District on Highway 118. The community's greatest growth in both popularity and population occurred in the 60's and early 70's during the racial bussing between LA county schools. Simi Valley United Methodist Church is not involved in any significant way with the connectionalism of the UMC except financially in the payment in full of the apportionments for many years. The church claims to support the greater church but very seldom do they participate openly in any connectional fellowship activities, with the exception of the pastor and very few laypersons.

Physically, the most decorated and well kept building on the 8-acre campus is the sanctuary. It is hexagon shaped with the seats facing in a semi-circle toward the altar. The altar is separated from the congregation by altar rails which create a distance between the cross and pastor and sacrificial table and the congregation. I have come to believe that this is more to keep the Christian symbolism and "influence" at a safe distance rather than to separate the people from approaching God. The sanctuary building has no windows with a view to the outside. It has only stained glass that allows light to shine through images of Jesus as the good shepherd and a circuit rider bringing the gospel along the trail. The outside of the building is all brick and mortar and appears like a fortress from the most prominent

corner. The entrance to the sanctuary faces into the parking lot and cannot be easily seen from the street. The entrance to all offices, classrooms and meeting places are turned inward toward the center of the property which is the parking lot. There is virtually no signage for new or visiting members except for six marked "Visitors Only" parking spaces which are usually occupied by long-time congregants during church services and events.

Although a large portion of the finances was devoted to maintaining the physical plant and existing, long time programs of the church, the rest was almost completely directed toward activities which benefit the member's personal walk with God. The $500,000 annual budget included only $3,000 for evangelism and $2,000 for outreach. Essentially, only 1% of the budget was dedicated to reaching out to the community for the purposes of inviting newcomers. Serving on committees and commissions within the church is by invitation only. These committees and commissions were mostly representative of the old guard of the church. New members were seldom included on their rolls and when they were, they needed to be particularly assertive to have any influence on policy or budget allocations. Consequently, assimilating new members was an extremely difficult task.

The Methodist church began its long history in Simi Valley in 1895 and remains the oldest continuous congregation existing there today. It was the first congregation to form in the community. It has been known for providing a meeting place for community groups for many years. These groups include, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Co-dependants Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Simi Valley Soccer, The Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl scouts, YMCA special events, and many more. In additional to providing the facility for other groups to meet, the church has provided meals and a place for the homeless to sleep once per week for several years. The church is also noted for the commitment many

of its members have made to the volunteer staff at Simi Valley Hospital. The personal cultural capital present there in the leadership is impressive.

The Simi Valley religious ecological landscape consists of one each, of most mainline churches, and a broad variety of evangelical churches. The mainline churches stay to themselves and represent a conservative end of the theological spectrum for their respective denominations. The independent or evangelical churches are generally ultraconservative and have predominantly fundamentalist agendas. Some years ago, there was a ministerial association. But now there is a general lack of interest in anything ecumenical, with a few exceptions where two or three smaller congregations combine for special events. There is a group of evangelical pastors who meet and claim that they include all congregations, but in reality they only invite the most conservative five churches for Wednesday lunches. Nothing has developed for social action from any of these attempts at organizing an ecumenical community. There has been reference to the United Methodist Church in Simi Valley as the social action church. The identity in the community is social action, yet the only way that action has consistently manifested itself is by facility sharing. The Conference Board of Congregational Development Annual Assessment of the church had reported its findings that the church was Self-Sustaining.

All this having been said, there is much potential at Simi Valley United Methodist Church. It has the societal and cultural capital to do great things in the community. Its fundamental challenge in the near term will be to find its voice. It needs to reassess its mission and vision and find ways to integrate it within itself. It needs to find a oneness between its implicit and explicit theologies. When it finds its voice, hopefully one for social action, it will be well staged to make a real difference in its greater community and culture.

Recently, a new task force for establishing an "enduring mission statement" had its first meeting. This is the second time they will employ the process. I introduced the process through the case study which follows. The evaluation of the results of this new task force is beyond the scope of this project. As was Harnish's experience when he participated in a similar function at Hyde Park, "the purpose of the task force was to lead the congregation in a process of study, dialogue, and prayer by which we could define God's mission and vision."[5] This "enduring vision task force" began with many of the same people who six-months earlier had completed the nine-month experience of the Sunday school task force which we will turn to now. The Sunday school task force was the pilot for testing a holding environment to act as a venue for employing the process of constructing faithful action and embracing adaptive change as was described in the previous chapter. As was also mentioned above, it resulted in generative learning which led to the renewed interest in missioning and visioning. I turn now to the original exposure of the process.

The Situation

The decline had been going on for several years but it had not seemed to be important enough to address until the person in leadership was considering leaving her role as Sunday School Superintendent. She began to speak about how she had noticed a decline in Sunday school attendance for some years but since this would be her last year serving in that capacity she felt that she needed to do something to fix the leak before she handed the baton to her successor. Her conversations with a broad base of the church leadership increased the sense of urgency to the point where it became a priority.

The Administrative Council met, as they always do, on the second Wednesday of the month. At the meeting in April, the superintendent presented a report, which outlined the

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[5] Ibid., 63.

significant decline in Sunday school numbers and focused on the children. There were only 24 children attending Sunday school on any given Sunday in this 600-member church. She stated, "There is an old saying, as the Sunday school goes, so goes the church." She was turning up the heat and was demanding that something be done about the challenge. She was not dictating any specific solutions, just that we do something about it. The Ad Council, in a glorious example of a flight to authority, recommended that a task force be created to investigate the problem, with the associate pastor as the chair. As the chair, I was to return recommendations for consideration.

<p align="center">The Process Implementation Description</p>

A task force was formed. On July 1, I met with the Ad Council Chair and developed a list of possible members of the task force. People were recruited to serve who represented a broad sampling of the whole church. A task force was established through the familiar structure of the Administrative Council.

The first meeting of the task force was held in mid-July. Many came to that first meeting with pre-formed solutions. What they left with were questions. At the first meeting, I worked with the group to establish the ground rules. The model that I was suggesting was something they had not seen before. I presented the process that we described in the new paradigm for leadership which Cormode calls Constructing Faithful Action. Proper time was given for definition and reflection. The first thing we did was to define the process that we would go through in finding the right answers to this ongoing problem. The process was key to the positive and necessary outcome of a shared vision with "buy-in" from the entire congregation. The situation at Simi Valley was very similar to what James Harnish describes when he moved to Hyde Park. Because of the history of the congregation, "it was critically

important …to lead the entire congregation in a process by which we could all listen for God's Spirit to speak to us." [6] The group would invite the entire congregation into conversation.

Like many of the others on the task force, I had in my mind what I thought would be the solution. I thought the answer was going to be all about promotion. After all, we had a significant improvement in the adult attendance the year prior just by developing a well-planned and executed promotional event. I was convinced that the only reason it was not a long lasting solution for the adult class attendance crisis was that we did not keep doing the promotion. I was falling prey to exactly what I was trying to avoid, jumping to answers before we really know what the questions are.

What I was trying to do in the development of these ground rules, was to set up a dynamic learning environment. What I needed to do was to open myself up to the learning process as well. Chris Argyris said that "The freedom to question and confront is crucial, but it is inadequate. To overcome skilled incompetence, people need to learn new skills—to ask questions behind questions."[7] I needed to learn these skills of questioning and to be open to questioning myself. We set up a marker board and began to learn about each other. We began to ask questions about the old stories of the congregation trying to surface those stories that define our Sunday school program, our problem and us. We struggled with following the rules but had all agreed that it was the right thing to do.

We had discussed the fact that this was not a new problem, nor did it have any simple answers. All of us, myself included, tried to offer solutions from time to time. But the solutions offered were typically technical solutions to adaptive challenges. Solutions like, a

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[6] Ibid., 43.
[7] Argyris, "Skilled Incompetence," 5.

change of time, a change of curriculum, or an increase in promotion. All of us were suffering from what Max DePree would call "temporary incompetence" at moving through the defined process of change.[8]

The change process we adopted was to first define where we really were in the Sunday school life-cycle by listening to our experience. After we had heard enough of our personal experiences to define the problem, we were going to reflect more on what that meant to us. We proceeded to ask the questions behind the questions. We were trying to figure out the underlying reasons for having arrived at our current situation. We were seeking to gather more information from the rest of the congregation. Once we felt we had enough information we began constructing solutions. After our solutions or recommendations were found, we went about finding a strategy for implementation. As these strategies were being implemented we returned to the definition stage to find how we had redefined our original experience and problem. Everyone accepted the fact that we might need to cycle through this process more than once to complete the responsibilities of the task force. It might have been advisable to move through the process a bit quicker in order to have the stamina to get through it twice. We were afraid that moving too quickly would shortcut the process that we ourselves were trying to embrace.

Moving too quickly was a difficult thing NOT to do. We all caught ourselves, and each other, wanting to jump ahead to the construction part of the process. Most often, it was an attempt to implement technical solutions. We quickly learned that our problems were more complex. We learned that real and lasting improvement in our Sunday school would require adaptive change, change that would redefine meaning for us, but more importantly for the greater congregation. What we found, was that it as much a time for unlearning as it

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[8] Max De Pree, Leadership Jazz (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1992) , 43-44.

was for learning. We, as a group, had not been through this process before. The process for us was foreign and therefore we had to massage it a bit. We had to be diligent to keep ourselves and others on track. We were not just embracing the adaptive challenge that we were charged to solve, we were managing the task of learning the process itself. Some people became frustrated at times and we needed to slow ourselves down. In speeding up and slowing down, we seemed to be able to "fail their expectations at a rate they can stand."[9]

We realized that part of the problem we were dealing with was that we had all habitually dealt with adaptive problems by implementing technical solutions. Our church had been focused primarily on the contextual congruence frame; which is not surprising since we were considered a "flagship" church for leadership, administrative and finance for the Cal-Pac conference. There is no doubt that we did that function very well, at least under the old organizational paradigm. The relational frame was present but not strong. The theological frame was our greatest weakness. It was not that the culture was absent. It was that the theological meaning for the symbols of the church were almost non-existent. People within the church based most actions on habit and tradition. The symbolism within the church was based on stories of generosity and giving. When the church needed something for its building or furnishings, generous donors gave them, presumably more out of altruism than faithfulness. In other words, these gifts had some interpersonal value but little or no theological meaning to the giver.

As with most things, one's greatest weakness can turn out to be our greatest strength. At least it was for this task force. We began to think of the questions in the various frames; theological, relational, and contextual. The stories were evaluated with these criteria. We stuck a poster on the wall for every meeting that had the three frames side by side to remind

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[9] Ronald Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 83.

us of the need to reflect in this manner. We began to embrace together the theological meanings of the stories we used to define the problem. We began to frame questions from a theological perspective and asked them of people between our meetings. "The process of answering those questions was as important as the answers themselves."[10] We were introducing to the whole congregation, with our specific framed questions, ideas for reflection and asking their input. The answers we got back surprised us, especially me. Asking theological questions brought out different answers. Many of these answers were getting at the question behind the questions. Asking why we have certain preferences created a different and broader reach of the task force's future recommendations and ultimately contributed to generational learning.

Many challenges in the Sunday school program began to surface. Interpersonally, teachers were well not supported in their ministry and were becoming overworked. They felt underappreciated. Administratively, there were few breaks for teachers. Relationally, there was no public appreciation. There were little, if any, support systems or staffing. There was no training for teachers or staff. Recruitment was wrought with challenges because few people felt equipped to teach at all. There was a general lack of scriptural knowledge and theological understanding among potential teacher candidates. Theologically, they had no spiritual enrichment programs, encouragement to grow in their faith through the teaching ministry or spiritual renewal programs. In terms of curriculum, there was almost no control over the curriculum choices made by teachers. There was a broad range along the conservative/liberal spectrum. There was little continuity in the theology being taught as the children moved through different grades with different teachers. These would all be issues that would need to be addressed in any proposed recommendations.

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[10] Harnish, 63.

One of the major issues that surfaced as to why young families did not bring their children to Sunday school was that they themselves could not be fed in worship. Being so busy with children, they were distracted from receiving God's grace. They had no particular need to have their children in worship with them because they didn't feel that their children were benefiting from it. They said that the services themselves were tailored to the older-adults of the congregation. The younger families, with the exception of devout traditionalists, wanted Sunday school during worship. Additionally, they spoke of the worship style not meeting their spiritual needs. Both services were called blended. Actually, they had just two or three praise songs led by our music director. In reality, the services were really traditional with a splash of contemporary music thrown in. These young families wanted to sing to the Lord. They wanted to clap their hands, without having to hold their children. They said that when Sunday school is before or after the service, that their children could not stand to be at church that long. More likely, without experiencing any spiritual fulfillment themselves, they probably ended up exhausted after a three-hour church workout. God called the Sabbath a day of rest. For these, there was no rest.

This new development left the task force in an even greater need to learn and embrace the skills of managing adaptive change. The young families needed more than a change of Sunday school time. They needed a change of worship time as well. They also needed a change in the style of worship. They were leaving the church quickly. Some were as if they were standing in the doorway on their way out, waiting to see if we were serious. The task force needed to move quickly enough to keep the departing families, but slow enough to keep the congregation for boiling over in considering the sweeping change we were likely to need to recommend.

As we continued our reflection through the interview process, we surfaced a discontent among the traditional worshippers as well. They had been very unhappy when the previous pastor introduced contemporary music to the traditional worship service they had come to love and expect. The addition of this kind of music had not been heard as "sing to the Lord a new song."[11] Considering the relative lack of understanding of the theological frame, the church had little more to do than make this an organizationally framed conclusion. Clearly, for those who were not readily hearing messages from the theological frame, they would understand the concept of returning their traditional service to them. The people, who are operating in the mode of interpersonal ownership and protectionism, will also provide an adaptive challenge which will eventually need to be addressed.

As the task force broadened the reach of interviews within the congregation, an undercurrent began to develop. It became evident that there were some defensive routines developing. Argyris said "Defensive routines exist. They are undiscussable. They proliferate and grow underground. And the social pollution is hard to identify until something occurs that blows things open." [12] There were a number of rumors moving around among the congregation. These were taking place around the coffee pot, in the hallways, before and after service, and on the telephone. There was a circling of the wagons developing among the opponents to change. This is the same group who rebelled when the previous pastor had the praise band begin to play in worship and when the altar rails were removed. The reestablishment of old alliances began to form and create new definitions of the work of the task force being shared among the congregation. The old alliances were preparing to gain strength to cover their theological weaknesses and to pretend those

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[11] Psalm 96:1 NRSV.
[12] Chris Argyris, "Skilled Incompetence," 5.

weaknesses did not exist. They were preparing to secure the undiscussable. The answer when faced with these forms of defensive routines is to put the work back on the people. In response, we opened the process up further to include our greatest opponents in the discussion.

To accommodate the task force needed to make a preliminary report of the findings before there was a completed construction of recommendations. This was an attempt to confront the defensive routines and have them move into the open. It was a way to make the undiscussable, discussable. In addition, it helped to ripen the issues in the minds of those who dig in their heels. They were able to hear the sense of urgency. Basically, it became necessary for us to move to strategy in the middle of forming conclusions and designing changes. Some adaptive work needed to take place. In the midst of this, I was reminded by the senior pastor, that the task force was to recommend changes only to the Sunday school program. Apparently, someone had created a rumor and "leaked it" to the senior pastor that I had said that he would not have a clue as to how to preach a contemporary sermon. He was told that I was trying to set up a competition between us that would ultimately end in a division of the church with there being "my congregation and his congregation." He was also concerned that the contemporary worship service, that I was probably better suited to lead, would be more popular causing him to lose some of his influence. Actually, none of this was true. I had made no such comment about his preaching ability nor was I interested in competing with him. We did agree however, that I was relating better with the younger group and my preaching style was more consistent with a contemporary worship. I suspect that there was enough truth in the claims that he was inclined to believe them. I encouraged him to come to the rest of the meetings of the task force until our recommendation was taken

to the administrative council. I also invited him to be involved in the preliminary findings presentations. There was a developing focus on me as the one suggesting all the changes when in reality it was the task force findings that were dictating the changes.

When we set out to develop the presentation of the preliminary findings, we spread out the presentation among the entire committee. This was done to draw the attention away from one person as being the harbinger of change, specifically me. We assigned specific areas of expertise to all the members of the committee. The more controversial issue, of a possible worship change, was placed in the later part of the presentation. The two Lay Leaders who were on the task force presented it. My responsibility was to establish the whole presentation with a framework of theological understanding, emphasizing that we are presenting the preliminary report to elicit further input before the final recommendation was made to Ad Council.

Setting up these presentations established holding environments for the entire congregation. It helped them embrace the changes that were needed at a rate they could stand. There were preliminary presentations made at the Administrative Council meeting a month prior to the final recommendation. They were also made after both worship services. There were articles in the biweekly newsletter for two months outlining all of the changes. There were messages sent via e-mail in the electronic newsletter. There were bulletin inserts every Sunday. Task Force representatives were available many Sundays after worship, with a PowerPoint presentation on a table in the narthex.

The more we tried to keep the heat up, the cooler it got, until eventually, it was considered by the vast majority, "a done deal." We had managed the holding environment for the majority of the congregation adequately. There was much discussion as to when the

proposed changes should be implemented. After ten meetings in three months, the task force was becoming weary. The process of managing adaptive change takes a great deal more time and energy than merely implementing technical solutions. Interpersonally, a great deal of enthusiasm and momentum had developed in and outside of the task force. The congregation had been primed for the changes. Theologically, the fact that the Advent season was upon us helped us focus on the hope and the promise of a new beginning compelled us. Organizationally, beginning in Advent was particularly important with the tremendous increase in worship attendance at Christmas time. Additionally, the Sunday school leadership changes at the first of the year. It was clear that we needed to move for the first Sunday of Advent, the day of new beginnings and the Sunday of Hope. Changes were broad reaching and included different worship times, Sunday school hours, a split adult class schedule, a change in worship style, and significant improvements to the Sunday school leadership and training programs. When we took the proposal to the Administrative Council in October, it passed unanimously. To have a unanimous vote for such a sweeping change at this church was unheard of. The process worked and left people smiling. All these changes became effective during the month of December.

Conclusions

There is a sense that the task force took the many aspects of the challenge of declining Sunday school attendance and boiled it down to a number of technical solutions. In the long-term, there is still adaptive work to be done to focus the church in a new direction. There needs to be work done to redefine the church as a missional church. The stated mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples. In the near term the church will have much meaning making to do as it adapts to new worship styles and new attitudes

toward its educational ministry. The Sunday School Task Force agreed to continue meeting in order to implement the changes proposed and, to continue its work of helping the congregation adapt to them. After the task force disbanded, a group of its participants pushed for a new task force to formulate an enduring mission statement for the church which it later completed. As part of the endorsement of the new mission statement, the church moved forward to bring the forty days of purpose program, which involved over 300 participants. The process continues with a new sense of faithfulness and commitment to God and the call.

Case Study II: St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, Newbury Park

Description of Local Church

St. Matthew's United Methodist Church was founded in 1966 at its current site in Newbury Park, CA. It is a parish church focusing on the 91320 zip code. Newbury Park is a small, middle to upper-middle class neighborhood, located in the City of Thousand Oaks, with a population of just over 37,000 people. It is located on a mountainous plateau, 900' above sea level, 8 miles from the coast across the Santa Monica Mountains, and 18 miles east of the boundary for the City of Los Angeles, up highway 101, in Ventura County. It enjoys a westerly ocean breeze, keeping the weather cool and the air fresh. Thousand Oaks is known for its extremely low crime rate. Average housing cost in Newbury Park is over $500,000 and there are no areas of poverty within the Newbury Park neighborhood.

The church membership is consistent with the community demographic with the exception of age. The churches average age is 45 years old and the average age of the community is 55. The membership make up of the church includes all age groups, with 57% as new Christians joining the church by profession or confession of faith, 30% transferring from other United Methodist churches, and the remainder transferring from other denominations. Only six of the charter members of the church remain, but many members have been attending more than ten years. The sense of ownership is strong by not limiting, in terms of maintaining the *status quo*. The church has fluctuated over the past 30 years in membership from about 120 to 225. It has the 210 mark three times and then returning over the ensuing three years back to about 180. The current membership is 171, with 24 of those having joined in the last 12 months. The church added a second service in the mid 1990s but

this earlier service has never achieved an attendance over 20. The later service, held at 10:00 am, has averaged about 60 in the past year.

The church is located on the outside edge of town, adjacent to the major recreation draw for the hikers and bicyclers exploring the Santa Monica Mountains State Park. Other than the visitors to the park, the church enjoys very little drive-by traffic. Its location is not well suited for community social services. The property is landscaped with native vegetation and is in a camp-like setting. The buildings and signage are consistent with that theme, including a very large water feature, which is used during worship and fellowship times. There is an administration building with a meeting area to accommodate about 30 people. A sanctuary building seats just over 200 with chairs enough for 140. The sanctuary is glass walled allowing for the enjoyment of the park-like setting. There is a new 1100 square foot fellowship hall, called the Wesley Room, used almost exclusively by the Children's Center, which also occupies about 2000 additional square feet in the education complex, located on the upper level. The Children's Center is open to preschool and after-school children, and is a ministry of the church. It meets onsite during the week and serves about 40 children.

The Situation

St. Matthew's has had numerous pastors, none of which had stayed more than seven years. Because the salary package had been chronically low, it was a good choice for early career pastoral appointments. The majority had stayed four years or less. The last three pastorates were one man and two women, lasting in durations of six-years, four years, and two years, respectively. The pastor, just before my coming, was a brand-new transfer from Ohio, was not well known by the cabinet or the Bishop who appointed her. She did not work out to be a "good fit" for the congregation.

When I arrived as the new pastor in July of 2003, the church membership was in decline, many persons had stopped coming to worship. The average combined Sunday attendance, including worship at both services and education was down to 60, with the 8:00am service at about 6 and the 10:00am service attendance about 44. Giving was significantly below pledge; the $181,000 budget was being funded to $160,000.

The buildings and site were dirty and in ill repair. The children's center was in debt to the church nearly $10,000 with no plan for repayment. The church was split over the Children's Center because the previous Montessori school had brought an income of $1,800 per month and the Church-run Children's Center had not seen a profit since its inception three-years previous.

The Conference Board of Congregational Development Annual Assessment of the church had reported its findings that the church was in a state of "transition towards closure." When I met with the Chair of Trustees, she asked me why I was talking about a bright future for the church when we were going to close anyway. It wasn't that she didn't care. It was that she, like most others, had lost hope.

The Process Implementation Description

As a transformative leader, the basis of leadership is meaning making. My first task at St. Matthew's was to return a sense hope to the congregation. I began preaching a series on 1Corinthians 13, focusing on God's faithfulness and our need to remain faithful to God. The message focused on our faithfulness being met by God's faithfulness, and that faithfulness is what brings hope. This introduced the idea of moving from success to faithfulness as a basis for church itself. This same message was repeated in all the initial meetings and fellowship experiences afforded me as the new pastor. When meeting

personally with people in their homes, I asked the question, "tell me a story when you remember the church most 'being the church'? The time when it was at its best." Many people reminisced and I listened carefully. This allowed for discussion offering reassurance that we can be there again. Some people shared their discontent and often anger at the Children's Center debacle. Others shared their hope for the children who were being served by the center. Few had no passion one-way or the other. It was clear that the primary underlying dissention revolved around the Children's Center experience. It was almost two months before I was made fully aware of the financial burden the Children's Center was placing on the church. I knew that there was a $50 draw monthly on the church budget, but I had no idea about the lack of money to reimburse the church for the employee withholding taxes and workers compensation insurance premium, which the church had already paid to the authorities.

While this situation involved values and beliefs about the need for a Children's Center, it was primarily based on the financial benefit to the church a Children's Center might offer. Half of the people saw it as a fundraiser, the other half as a ministry. I thought it could be both. The means to make it both did not require adaptive change, but because of the urgency of the matter, considering both organizations' budget problems I needed to move quickly to provide technical solutions. A small-win early in the pastorate would not hurt either. I prepared two business plans for presentation to the Children's Center Board. One was designed to close, and cut our losses, and the other to remain open, with significant changes that would make the Center profitable to the church in four months. They chose to remain open, and the Center began paying a tithe of the tuition in the fourth month, as planned. This afforded me some significant cultural capital that I used to implement a

number of significant changes that would help to align the church to operate better as a dynamic learning environment for the future.

Because the old organizational structure of the church was still in place, some small adjustments could enhance the future functioning of the church as a Model II organization. With these changes in place it would also allow for a functioning dynamic learning environment to be introduced at St. Matthew's. Because all of this was so new to the people at the church, the wisdom from James Harnish helps direct some of my actions as leader. "In long-established churches, people are more likely to accept change if it comes through familiar decision-making processes."[13] In order to manage the pace needed and the level of sweeping changes that were necessary, I used a more familiar leadership style to the long-standing members of the congregational. With the cultural capital I had gained from solving the Children's Center debacle, I employed selectively, the familiar command-and-control leadership paradigm as needed. At the same time, I used the meaning making process to provide a new understanding of faithfulness and discerning God's call, as a way to establish basic difference reflection about being the Church. I overestimated the value of cultural capital, and rushed things. As a consequence, I paid a price. That price was centered primarily within two committees that proposed the greatest challenges, finance and worship.

<div align="center">The Finance Committee</div>

The finance committee had been operating close to the edge for a very long time. One of the key persons in the finance committee has served in city government for years. It came as no surprise to me that the finance committee was using a model for operating, similar to a governmental model of tax, and then spend what is available. This model puts the finance committee in charge of deciding what ministries we can do based on the finances

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[13] Harnish, 63.

we have. This is incompatible with the ethical model proposed in Chapter 2, where the discernment of God's call is the source of ministry direction. The people in ministry discern the action that the church is being called to, and then we find the money to fund them. It was helpful that the finance committee's responsibilities are outlined in the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. The Discipline lists the finance committee's responsibility to compile the budget, not limit it. It is the Stewardship Committee's responsibility to find ways to pay for it. This came as a relief for the finance committee, to not have to deal with cutting budgets, but they did have some concerns. As usual however, God was faithful and remained faithful. The budget under this new paradigm for 2004 was $215,000 and the projected income was about $216,000 once the pledge campaign was completed. This was an extraordinary realization of God's faithfulness to the finance committee who sat in awe of God's ability to balance the budget. The 2005 campaign showed a similar result with $261,000 budgeted and $259,000 in projected income.

The Worship Committee

The worship committee was quite a different story and not as positive an experience. When I had arrived as the new pastor, I met with the music director who had been planning virtually all aspects of worship for over a year. It seems that the previous pastor was asked by the committee at one point to turn worship design over to the music director, leaving the pastor only to preach. In addition, there was a good deal of pastoral care being done by the music director who really had no training in the area. The opinion of the role of pastor held by the worship committee was minimalist. When I had arrived, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee asked me to take back the role of supervisor to the employees of the church, one of which was the music director. When I first met with her, I let her know my preferences

for designing the worship service and picking the hymns because of their theological significance in managing themes for making meaning. Not understanding the concepts and basis of transformative leadership, this came as somewhat of a surprise to her. She saw it initially as an affront to her and the committee who had gone through the painful process of asking the previous pastor to step away from worship planning because of what they defined as incompetence. I could have handled it better with her and the committee, but I was in too much of a hurry and was too close. I did not take the time I needed, to "get in the balcony." When the worship committee heard the outcome of the conversation with the music director, they began to treat me as if I were some sort of dictator. Perhaps they were reverting to a way they felt they needed to be with my predecessor at the time of greatest challenge. More likely, I just plain deserved it. This colored all future interaction with the leadership of the committee. It was only with the worship committee that this sort of response was apparent. This is why I think my assessment is close to correct. What they needed was some attention from me or another person in authority, to deal with the adaptive challenge they were facing. They needed to confront the issues of the past, and I needed to help them and myself become less defensive. The outcome was that both co-chairs of the committee resigned because they "didn't know how to please me." Fortunately, they did not leave the church. If I had been asking the questions behind the questions, and sought out the actual inference, I might have seen the whole experience differently. It worked out well between the music director and me; we have an excellent working relationship and strong mutual respect today. Since then, with my encouragement, she has begun seminary training and is seeking ordination as a clergyperson in The United Methodist Church.

Structural Change to Embrace Dynamic Learning

Over the past four months, the church administrative council constructed, reviewed, and adopted a new mission statement and organizational structure. The mission of the church is in three parts and states that we are a people committed to BRING spiritual wanderers into relationship with Jesus Christ, GROW as disciples through small group community, and SERVE out of our calling and giftedness. The structure of the organization has been altered in the programming areas to be run as teams within groups, as opposed to its previous structure committees working under the administrative council. Teams meet as needed and groups are designated BRING, GROW, and SERVE. The group leader's sole responsibility is to keep the mission statement and the specific purpose of the teams at the forefront of their minds. The group leaders will be trained to ask the "layers" question for all situations and to train the leaders of the teams to do the same. Meaning that ideally, every conversation about choice and direction, will beg the questions about what a proposed action says about God and about our love for one another, before it asks the business question. This will offer the advantage of keeping God at the forefront of our choices and decisions, and calls all of us to move forward in our faith journey. These changes in structure and actions of leadership have set the stage for a new organization of dynamic learning and faithful action.

Evaluation

Currently, we have moved to an average Sunday attendance of 110, which represents a near doubling. The 8:00am service has a dozen people coming weekly. We have added an additional music person, and are hiring a paid youth director. We have increased our teaching staff by three new teachers/assistants at the children's center, which is enjoying the highest enrollment ever and continues to tithe its tuition receipts. We have increased our

church budget to $261,000, which we predict will be fully funded with a surplus as it was last year. The Congregational Assessment this year shows us having moved from transitioning to closure two years ago to self-sustaining with all four criteria met. This is the highest vitality measure for congregations in the assessment process.

We have made significant improvements to the physical plant. In the past 18 months, we have replaced the roof on the sanctuary, resurfaced the parking lot, remodeled the nursery, put new flooring in the Wesley Room. We have replaced the pulpit, altar, lectern, and baptismal font. We have added chairs, bistro tables, and hymnals in the sanctuary. We have replaced the old organ with a new keyboard and improved the lighting and sound system.

Conclusions

Regarding the Worship Committee, it would have been a good idea to find an issue to engage with the committee to work together for a common need. Sometimes a transformative leader needs to create or inflate a challenge to gain the sense of urgency needed to fuel the energy for the construction of faithful action. The construction of faithful action dealing with a concern about the length of the worship service might have been done, which could have healed past hurts and resolved current misunderstandings.

Regarding the finance committee, had God not provided the means through the stewardship campaign I would have been in a rather awkward situation of needing to backpedal. But God was and is always faithful.

Regarding the Children's Center, the tithing was a helpful concept to bring before the church especially for those whose concerns were about the lost revenue from Montessori. It

was presented to them as a tithe openly making it difficult for them to continue airing concerns about specific dollars unless they were tithing themselves.

Combined Conclusions

As was apparent in the Case Study I, the act of constructing faithful action can have a profound impact on the relationship and the sense of oneness in the church. If that process, even though an adaptive challenge might have needed elevation, had been used in the case of the worship committee in Case Study II, it might have avoided the challenges I experienced and brought us all closer together.

CHAPTER 7

TOWARD A NEW PARADIGM OF LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINED CHURCH
REVITALIZATION: PROJECT CONCLUSIONS

The thesis of this paper is that when a church is in maintenance mode, significant and

sustained church revitalization can be accomplished through seeking our future direction

from God and thereby establishing creative and transforming community engagement

processes involving development of definitive, reflective, constructive and strategic learning

environments.

This project has reviewed the history of the decline of the mainline denominations

and specifically The United Methodist Church. Since the 1960s, the church has experienced

a steady decline in membership, with the exception of the evangelical sects. In 1984, a

significant concern and challenge was lifted up to the entire denomination at the General

Conference. That challenge has remained unmet. Many solutions were offered along the

way. Some were suggesting the use of secular business practices, which had worked in that

environment to various degrees, and some were tried with variable success in the church.

Specific characteristics of successful growth churches were researched, described and

suggested by various authors. Some were adopted with mixed results. The church became

even more secular in the way it operated, and still continued in decline.

The thesis of this paper draws us back into conversation with God. It redirects our

focus, from asking the experts in organizational structures or management procedures, for the

answer. It considers the concepts outlined by Chris Argyris, Ron Heifetz, and Peter Senge in

developing and managing dynamic learning environments as a means to do church. It

suggests processes rather than procedures or programs. It suggests personal and communal

reflection as opposed to highly structured organizations. It directs us to be in conversation

with God for our direction. It also draws us, for the purposes of creation, into conversation with community; the community of faith, the community of our hometown, the community of church, and the community of our own personal microcosm of life. We are called by the thesis of this project to be creative and transformed, and to assist in the transformation of others. God created us in God's own image. Not so that we might look like God, but so we might create like God. We are called to learn and journey towards a greater faithfulness. Through processes, not organizations are these calls achieved. This way, the church becomes less focused on its structure, and more on its processes. We as Christians, are called to live and act as we believe. We need to make our espoused theology evident to all through what they observe to be our theology-in-use.

Throughout this project, as I have experimented with the processes of establishing dynamic learning environments, managing holding environments, and facilitating constructive faithful action in the congregations I have served. Preliminary indicators suggest fruits from God's response of the faithfulness these congregations have demonstrated. I have found that God is indeed faithful, when we are willing to get out of the way and let God be in control.

For years, The United Methodist Church has struggled with its identity. It has focused so diligently on social justice issues understood by the clergy and some of the lay leadership, that much of the membership either has forgotten, or never heard the call to faith as the precursor to action. For Simi Valley United Methodist Church that call to faithfulness has grown since our case study was completed there. Recently, nearly half the church was involved in the Purpose Driven Life and people are turning out in droves seeking to serve God there, not because it feels good, but because it is a way of expressing their love for God

and one another. At St. Matthew's, there is a new sense of hope for the congregation's future. There is a renewed sense of faithfulness. People are bringing their friends, relatives, and neighbors to church again. People are speaking in terms of God's call on their lives. They are responding in faithfulness.

The return to God centered ministry does not require a set of characteristics to be in place, or a diligent following of steps that lead to a successful result focused on the achievement of preset goals. It doesn't purport empowerment which doesn't work anyway. The return to God is about prayer and engaging in Christian conversation. Measuring faithfulness is ultimately up to God. If we as humans establish specific criteria that we define as "Christian," we disallow or ignore God's unique call on each of us, our congregations, and our denomination. Certainly, there are indicators that suggest that God is present. The best I have found, the most accurate measure is the sentient experience of the Holy Spirit; and the assurance that comes in sitting with another, discerning God's call on our lives and our communities.

So how can we help one another in the process of improving our ability to lead? A focus on processes that engage communities are offered in this text, which appear to have worked in at least two cases. By working towards better personal self-awareness, and being willing to engage in Model II behaviors, we can prepare ourselves for better outcomes. By establishing expectations to think and act as church, we can come to a closer walk with God. By reorganizing our structures, and nesting reflective processes within them, we can design our churches to be better prepared to help people in various places along their journey of faith, and to find them engaged in the process of spiritual growth.

More needs to be done to devise ways to order the structures of our churches, so as to allow even the novice to find themselves in the process. I think this can done better than what I have outlined as the "ideal," presented in the paradigm described in chapter 5. Also more time needs to be given to assessment of fruits of these processes. I don't see a way to really measure what we are suggesting. A control seems impossible, making the sample needs so large, that only a huge and long-term retrospective analysis could reach any level of statistical significance. Further work is needed to establish a means by which to measure faithfulness.

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